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INEFFABLECHAOS

Cacoethes

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Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/23965102.

Rating:
Explicit

Archive Warning:
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Category:
M/M

Fandom:
Harry Potter - J. K. Rowling

Relationships:
Harry Potter/Tom Riddle, Harry Potter/Voldemort, Harry Potter/Tom Riddle | Voldemort, Avery Sr./Harry Potter

Characters:
Theodore Nott, Abraxas Malfoy, Avery Sr. (Harry Potter), Lestrange Sr. (Harry Potter), Evan Rosier, Mulciber Sr. (Harry Potter), Armando Dippet, Albus Dumbledore, Harry Potter, Tom Riddle | Voldemort, Voldemort (Harry Potter), Greengrass Family (Harry Potter), Horace Slughorn, Basilisk (Harry Potter), Unspeakable Characters (Harry Potter), Sanguini (Harry Potter), Gellert Grindelwald, Leonard Spencer-Moon

Additional Tags:
Dark Harry, Time Travel, Slow Burn, Slytherin Harry Potter, The Deathly Hallows, Hogwarts, Morally Grey Harry Potter, Unforgivable Curses (Harry Potter), Dark Magic, Rituals, Powerful Harry, Teenage Tom Riddle, Basilisks, Mentor Dippet, Naive Harry Potter, Theft, Angst, Macabre, Horror, Nightmares, Torture, Minister for Magic Tom Riddle, Vampires, Ministry of Magic (Harry Potter), Soul Bond, Unhealthy Relationships, Mildly Dubious Consent

Language:
English

Series:
Part 1 of Masters of Death

Collections:

Greats fics currently ongoing, Legacy's Library, HarryTom, Croe's Nest Of Stories, Completed Subscriptions, Top-Tier Complete Tomarrymort Fics, Avidreaders HP completed faves, Best HP FIC that i love, Harry Potter masterlist - read agains., Completed Masterpieces Across Fandoms, Tomarryslash, Favorite HP Fics, my heart is here, Tomarry, Best Tomarry, Theos Harry Potter Must Reads, hufflepuffdemiwizard's completed works, top_tommary_completed, HP Fics that are dear and special to me, thiccboimork's harry potter reading list, thiccboimork's reading list, HP the best ones, Attendez_la_creme 🍲, Stories That Completely Took Over My Life, Lovely Legends of Long Length, Wonderfully Well-Written Works, Favorite Harry Potter Fanfics, HPStoriesForTheWin

Stats:

Published: 2020-05-02 Completed: 2021-03-05 Words: 121,775 Chapters: 38/38

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by IneffableChaos

Summary

After the Sectumsempra incident, Harry runs to the Room of Requirement to get rid of the Half Blood Prince's journal. He wants somewhere to hide but when he enters the room, he is thrown back to 1943 where he struggles with his use of Dark magic, sending him down a path leading to Tom Riddle.

Notes

Characters and world belong to J.K.Rowling, not me...sadly.

This is not (of course, because we are dealing with Tom Riddle) a healthy story or relationship. You are warned.

Enjoy!

See the end of the work for more notes

Chapter 1

Chapter Notes

Part 1 - Chapters 1-37

Blood. Metallic and tangy, the smell was so strong that he could taste it. It was permeated into his robes, shoes and every crevice between. Or was it his guilt he could taste? Thick and heavy.

His magic trembled inside of him, even with his wand stashed in his pocket. The use of *Sectumsempra* had rattled his very bones. There was a bouncing in his stomach that was a mix of fear and...something else.

Echoes of his shoes slapping on the stone floor thundered around him. The book in his hands seemed too heavy. Traitor. What he thought would help him, had destroyed everything. The image of Draco Malfoy's bloodied face flashed through his mind. His nemesis, slashed from face to his stomach, ripped open by a single spell.

Harry skidded to a stop in front of the blank wall. *I need somewhere to hide...I need somewhere to hide…*

He could not see Snape like this. His hands were trembling too much, and Snape could rip through his mind and steal the truth.

There was a shimmer before a door materialised. Harry could have sobbed with relief. He grabbed the handle and ran inside, closing it with a slam. He rested his sweaty head on the wooden door, taking in a deep breath to stablise himself.

"Excuse me?"

Harry froze. His back straightened as he turned around, emerald eyes flying open. "Who are you?" he asked.

It was an elderly man with a long but bushy white beard, brown eyes observing him critically. "Headmaster Dippet. Who are *you* ?"

Harry looked around, seeing he was back in the corridor, not in the Room of Requirement. This was a joke. "Dumbledore is the Headmaster," he uttered, voice taking on a hoarse note.

The old man made a low hum before raising an eyebrow. "I can assure

you that I am the Headmaster. Professor Dumbledore is our Transfiguration teacher. Now, I recognise all of my students, and you are not one of them. How did you get into these walls?"

Harry realised there was a wand pointed at him at hip-level. The movement was so subtle he had not even realised. He allowed his eyes to wander over the man and it felt like cold ice had dripped down his back. It was the same face that stared at him from a portrait in Dumbledore's office, a different cut of robes that was old-fashioned… He then looked back at the door behind him, to see nothing but a wall.

At Harry's silence, the wizard continued, "We shall speak in my office."

To his surprise, Harry was to lead, with Dippet behind with a wand at his back. If Dippet was Headmaster, this meant that this was either some horrifying nightmare or the Room of Requirement had deemed the past *somewhere safe*. His feet led the way down the corridor. Heart thumping in his chest, he still clutched the Advanced Potion Making book in his arms even though he felt such anger towards the Half-Blood Prince.

During his journey, he tried to string his thoughts together but he could not get the threads to match up. He pinched the skin on his wrist to try and prompt him to wake up, but only received sharp pain in response.

He received a calculating look when he stopped by the gargoyle that protected the Headmaster's office.

" *Ad meliora* ." With the password, the gargoyle stepped aside, allowing Harry to climb the stairs up to the office with the other man behind him. "Please sit."

Harry sat down on a hard-backed chair, unlike the slightly more comfortable ones of Dumbledore's office. He shifted, placing his book in his pocket so he could clasp his hands together. The Office was slightly different, with a range of strange silver hangings from the ceiling that looked like the runes Hermione studied and less bookshelves.

Dippet sat behind his desk, one hand coming up to stroke his beard. "From my perspective, a boy appeared in one of Hogwarts hallways in front of my eyes during an afternoon stroll. No one can apparate within these walls apart from the Headmaster. Would you care to

explain yourself?”

Harry swallowed. “What year is this, Sir?”

Those brown eyes narrowed. “What year do you think it is?”

“I know this is in the past, so I know it isn’t…” He paused. “My year is 1997, Sir.”

Headmaster Dippet made a low, thoughtful hum. “You claim that Professor Dumbledore is the Headmaster, which was my hope for the future. However, dear boy, I do ask that you reveal no more of the future you claim to be from. How and why you are here is unknown to myself, and you by the look of things. Hogwarts is a place like no other and just as strange things have happened before.”

“I need to get back. People are waiting for me...I have a really important...mission,” Harry uttered, panic seizing him.

“Dear boy, time travel is an unknown quantity. There have been myths over time, but being a Headmaster does not allow you mysterious magic.” Dippet sighed. “How did you manage this? A time turner?”

“The Room of Requirement. I wanted somewhere to...be alone for a while.”

Another hum. “I see. The room is one of lost legends. In the first instance, we should return there to investigate whether we can return you to your time. If that is not possible, we shall have to think of a solution for the time until we can fix this for you.”

Harry closed his eyes and rested back in the chair. One moment he had used dark magic to accidently slice Malfoy, and the next he was thrown back in time. Did Hogwarts hate him? Was it the use of dark magic?

“All right.”

***

Four hours he had spent investigating the wall with the Headmaster. At first, he was determined, retracing his footsteps and repeating his

mantra about wanting a place to hide. Then he changed it, to plead/demand the room to take him back to his actual time period. It took him just over two hours to reduce himself to loud pleading, not caring about the other man's presence behind him. Luckily, the corridor had been warded to not let anyone else in or observe.

The Headmaster had assisted with spells and with his connection with the castle but nothing. It was as if Hogwarts had turned its back on Harry.

When the windows became darker, a hand had taken his shoulder and led him back through the corridors to the Headmaster's Office.

That was where he sat once more, morose and staring into the delicate cup of tea in his trembling hands.

"Harry, I believe we must plan for the future as it stands at this moment. Now, from what you have disclosed, you are in your Sixth Year. I think it is best that you resume your studies with us until we can find a way to send you back." Dippet leaned forward over his desk. "However, I will make you aware that sending you back may be impossible. Then again, you travelling back here is supposed to be impossible."

"What year is this?" he asked, brain kicking into motion at the words.

"It is October, 1943."

Harry took in a deep breath. It had been the beginning of May 1997. He was in Riddle's time. What year would the boy be? Had he already killed by now?

"Now, I have something to request of you," Dippet said. "You are not to speak of your future time to anyone. You are not to disclose anything that may alter the future in any way. Already your presence may cause some alterations, and if this is permanent then we have no choice. For that, I would like you to practice Occlumency with me each evening this week."

Harry's mouth twisted. His previous experience with Snape had been torture. "Yes, Sir."

Dippet stood up and made his way over to a shelf.

Emerald eyes widened behind glasses as the man removed the Sorting Hat. "I have already-."

The Headmaster silenced him with a hand. “No more. You will be Sorted, otherwise your name will not register.”

Harry nodded numbly.

“Now, the Potter’s direct relative were the Peverell’s. Your name on the attendee list of Hogwarts will read as Hadrian Peverell. You are an orphan who had been on the run from Grindelwald after trying to recruit your mother, a lost niece of Iloanthe Peverell. You need to flesh out the details and we will work on your story throughout the oncoming weeks. Avoid any talk - you are still coming to terms with the loss of your mother.” Dippet offered the Sorting Hat.

With his trembling hands, he put his now-cold tea on the desk and took the hat. Harry put it on.

“*Strange...my first student who has already foreseen the events to come...Hogwarts welcomes you back, Mr Peverell. Before I sort you, know that Hogwarts never turns it back on a student. Your place here was decided by her, to fix...or change...or do nothing - we shall only know with time.*”

“Do you know how I can get back?” Harry asked.

Laughter echoed. “*Far beyond my powers and knowledge. Now, where to put you…*”

“I was in Gryffindor.”

“*Hmmm, I can see why*.”

“It would probably be easier if I returned there.”

“*Strange to see such wonder in a barbaric act.*”

Harry choked out a sound at the words. “I didn’t-”

“*Loyal, loyal to those that are close to you. Courage… determination...not afraid to take risks. Interesting. Powerful...and overlooked. You need a home. SLYTHERIN.*”

“No, no, no,” Harry repeated, almost fighting the Headmaster in his removal of the hat.

Dippet gave him a strange look as he took the hat back to the shelf. “Slytherin, Mr Peverell.”

Harry could only watch in horror as his robes changed to Slytherin green lining and the House insignia appeared on his left chest.

“Now, Mr Peverell, as an orphan, I shall send to your dormitory your relevant books and clothing from our school Hardship Fund. I shall sort out what we will do over the summer holiday, shall it come that we do not manage to send you back. I want you to see this as home.” Headmaster Dippet remained standing, stroking his beard. “Your subjects shall shadow a fellow Slytherin’s, so they can guide you in your gaps. I expect the best from my students. Abraxas Malfoy is a distinguished student who will show you how it is done in their House.”

Malfoy? It could not get worse. Harry’s stomach clenched as he remembered the blood. The blood that was dried on his robes. Had the Headmaster seen it? Dippet had not made any reference. His robes were black so it would hide stains…

“Come along, time for dinner and for you to meet your fellow House.”

Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

> Harry is 16 at this point, so is of age - just making that note for the future!
>
> Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Food untouched, Harry was frozen in place at the Slytherin table, where Headmaster Dippet had led him. They had gotten there before staff and the first trickle of students. As if by intuition, Harry had made a beeline for Gryffindor's table but a hand on his shoulder steered him to the left table.

Dippet had left him with words that he had been chewing on. ' *I want your best. You are to use this time to learn and I expect the best from you. If Hogwarts saw fit to send you here, there has to be a reason. My help also hinges on your grades. I will not allow one of my students to fall behind.* '

Hermione had always been the one with the books. Harry's research skills were average at best, in comparison. His chest ached with longing at the thought of his friends. He had barely seen them in passing before rushing out to dispose of his evidence.

Now he had to impress Dippet.

More students came in. There were looks in his direction, although there were only five Slytherins sat on the table - all younger years by the look of them. Harry looked up at the Head table - to see a range of Professors sitting and conversing with Dippet. Some of them looked in his direction with curiosity. One had a mix of brown and grey hair, more grey than brown but there was no mistaking those blue eyes. Professor Dumbledore. But those eyes looked upon him not with the usual kind expression but one of suspicion.

Dumbledore was the smartest wizard he knew. Maybe he could help? It would be something to discuss with Dippet when he could.

Harry's back straightened as an odd sensation ran down his spine. His head turned down the table and he couldn't help the sharp 'fuck' fall from his lips.

Sliding into the Slytherin table was an all-too familiar face. There was no denying the perfectly coiffed black hair, and the arrogance that spewed from every pore. The face was schooled into a neutral expression as another boy gesticulated at a parchment floating between them. Tom Riddle waved it away and began to pour himself a glass of pumpkin juice. It was hilarious really in - a macabre way - to see the future megalomaniac drinking such a standard drink.

His fingers skimmed the wand in his pocket. He could end it here. Killing Tom Riddle would save his parents and countless others. Though he doubted he could pull it off in a hall full of powerful wizards like Dumbledore.

Harry snapped his hand away from his wand as his thoughts ground to a halt. When had killing been the first logical conclusion? This Tom Riddle was not the snake-faced villain...yet. How far had the boy gone?

Brown eyes connected with his across the table. Harry frowned, looking down at his untouched potatoes and meat. His fingers moved up to his scar, where there was a slight tingle. No pain. Not the lancing heat that seared into his brain.

There was a loud clearing of the throat that drew a lot of the student body to look over to the teacher's table.

Harry sighed, rubbing his right temple.

"Dear students, as a lot of you may notice, we are joined tonight by a new student. Mr Hadrian Peverell has joined Slytherin as a Sixth Year student. I am sure we will all make him feel welcome, especially during these hard times," Dippet said, voice carrying across all of the tables. "Enjoy your meal."

The silence soon gave way to whispering but it was not before long that dinner began to resume.

Harry kept his head low, pulling his fork through the mashed potato in order to keep his hands busy. Just hours ago he had been thinking about Ginny, wandering the corridor until he heard a sobbing… Malfoy. He had been about to use the Cruciatus on Harry. Harry had no choice but to react. Snape had said Malfoy would be fine, but the fury that had flashed in those dark eyes…

"Mr Peverell...Mr Malfoy, could you follow me please boys."

Harry's head rose after a clearing of the throat. Inwardly, he cursed himself at already slipping up. A new name was going to be one of the hardest things to get used to.

The Headmaster was giving him a stern look, whilst a boy with white blonde hair had already stood. Lucius Malfoy's father. His hair was straight and down to his shoulder, regal face schooled into a neutral mask as cool, blue eyes ran over Harry as he stood.

Dippet marched down the Great Hall, both boys trailing after him. Harry did not chance a look at Riddle, his mind too confused and tired to deal with this additional problem. Both Malfoy and him walked in silence, the blonde slightly ahead.

They followed the Headmaster down the corridor and back up to his office. Harry was weary of the place already.

"Mr Malfoy, may I introduce you to Mr Peverell."

The blonde boy, who sat on a chair to the right hand side, inclined his head forward in a nod. "Peverell - I thought the name had died out."

"Mr Peverell and his mother had been...travelling Europe. With her death, he was sent here to study. And that is what I want your help with." Dippet stroked his beard. "His formal education is severely lacking, and I want you to bring him up to speed with our standards and the standards Slytherin expects of its housemates. He shall be shadowing your timetable."

Harry glowered at the Headmaster at the reference of his education severely lacking, even if it did fit with the story they had crafted.

"Yes, Sir."

"His belongings have been moved to your dormitory. Mr Peverell has classes with me each evening for the next week that he needs to attend after dinner, so I can go over the details of his prior education." Dippet gave a stern look at Harry, who had not dropped his glower. "You are both excused."

Malfoy led the way out. He stopped as the gargoyle moved back into position. "Abraxas Malfoy." He held out a hand.

Harry stiffened. *He held out his hand to shake Harry's, but Harry did not take it* . If he had taken Draco Malfoy's hand, what would have happened? One rejection shaped the future...or past Harry found

himself in.

His cheeks flushed as his hand trembled as it took the other boy's. The pale hand was warm, gripping him in a tight shake. "Hadrian Peverell."

"Has the Headmaster given you a tour?" The hand withdrew and Abraxas began to walk, Harry quickly falling into step.

"Yes," he lied.

"There is no particular map of Hogwarts. She has a life of her own...secret passageways and allsorts of forgotten rooms," Abraxas explained smoothly. "Even Headmaster Dippet does not know most of them. We Slytherins do look after our own, so try and stick with the people I introduce you to."

Harry stopped walking, all colour draining from his face. He had been sorted into Slytherin and would be living in the same House as Voldemort. The reality crashed upon him, suffocating and terrifying.

"Hadrian?"

Emerald eyes blinked behind glasses. "Sorry, just...a lot."

Those cool blue eyes studied him. "Grindelwald?"

"What?"

Abraxas shrugged. "Obviously. The Peverell's are old-blood, powerful figures. With your mother and you 'travelling' around Europe? Grindelwald tried to recruit her."

Harry forced his brain to move. "I don't really want to talk about it."

"Understandable." They started to walk again. "I am sorry about your loss."

He swallowed hard, giving a small nod.

"We will need to set up a studying timetable to catch you up. I hope you like libraries." Abraxas gave him a smile. "In Slytherin, our Head of House has very high expectations. If you want to meet the right people, Professor Slughorn will make those connections...if you are a favourite of his."

The Slug Club...where Tom Riddle would get the answers about

horcruxes from Slughorn. Given that it was impossible to tell what time of year Riddle did it, it could have already happened. But how could he stop it all? He had Riddle here, in the castle, before he became Voldemort. Had Myrtle been killed yet? Had Hogwarts sent him here to stop it...or to watch and learn?

“You will be staying in our Sixth year dormitory. There is a spare bed as our previous housemate Percy was killed last year, mother found the Muggle war and Wizard war too much and murdered her whole family.” Abraxas gave him a sad look. “Percy was a bit timid at the best of times for a Slytherin but his own mother? Anyway...the boys are interesting characters.”

I bet they are , Harry thought darkly. In all of this, he had forgotten about the Muggle war that was also raging on. In his time, these people were just memories, people who once lived. The boy beside him would die. Besides, he had never seen or heard of Abraxas Malfoy. What had happened to him?

“Any hobbies?”

Harry blinked. “Uh...I like quidditch.”

“Which position?”

“I don’t mind...but I usually play Seeker.”

Abraxas gave him a grin, which startled Harry. Had he ever seen Draco smile - one that wasn’t a smirk? “Brilliant news. Avery is abysmal but we can’t get anyone to replace him. Riddle has the right build, but he refuses.”

The thought of a young Voldemort on a broom was a sickening image. Too normal. Too sane. “I need to focus on my studies first,” Harry said, not wanting his name to become too familiar in this time period. “Dippet is rather…”

“Intense?” Malfoy chuckled. “He is fair though. The Headmaster expects the best from all of us and does not play favourites. Not like some. You should watch out for Professor Dumbledore, the Transfiguration teacher. Any excuse to take points from Slytherin. It drives Riddle insane.”

That did not sound like Dumbledore at all. The twinkling blue eyes and grandfatherly way… Harry allowed his thoughts to trail off. As much as he could kid himself, it was not as if everyone was invited to

Dumbledore's Office for meetings about Voldemort. He had never given much thought from outside of that bubble. Dumbledore had stripped Slytherin's House Cup victory in First Year. But that was because of Slytherin and its history of Death Eaters. And he was going to be living alongside them.

He could not see Dumbledore being some Snape-like figure in the past. Clearly, the Slytherins would hate a man who opposed Dark magic.

As they had taken the staircases, it had filled Harry with a bit of positivity that some things were the same. It was as if the castle never changed. As they passed pupils, there were differences - fashionable ones. Different haircuts, attitudes towards gender etc.

Abraxas gestured to the door at the bottom, by the Entrance Hall. Harry took in a deep breath and entered. The temperature plummeted as he descended into the belly of the dungeons. It was not as if the walls were slimy or there was a strange dripping sound. In fact, it was eerily beautiful, lanterns overhead casting light on the stone staircase.

Harry emerged on a corridor with a bare stretch of wall. Abraxas came to stand by his side, the smell of vanilla wafting over with him. A small smile tugged the side of his lips. "Each common room has its own password. Ours for this week is: Snakewood." At Harry's quizzical look, Abraxas added, "Salazar Slytherin's wand was made from it."

Malfoy approached the wall and said the password. Much like Diagon Alley, the bricks started to come apart, but formed an elegant archway where a slight green light poured out onto the stone.

Taking in a breath so deep his lungs protested, Harry followed Abraxas inside the snake's den.

Chapter End Notes

Next chapter: Riddle examines the newcomer

Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

> Little longer than the last chapters. I thank you all for the lovely comments, they really help with motivation in these unreal times!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Somehow, the common room was more beautiful than he remembered. Then again, the last time he had been here was his second year at Hogwarts, where he had been in a rush to get information from Malfoy before the polyjuice potion ran out.

Now he looked upon the place with more mature eyes.

Emerald light filtered in from a glass cupola overhead, where there were strange movements. As he squinted, he could make out fish swimming and what looked like seaweed. There were rumours that the Slytherin common room was submerged in the Great Lake. It turned out that the rumours were true. How he had missed that in his first visit, he really did not know.

Panels of glass all around the circular common room also led out to the body of water. The stone of the room shimmered in the light, especially where lanterns were hanging from tall arches. There were an assortment of dark leather sofas and desks for studying. Pairs of students played wizard's chess on small plinths, but the majority of them had their heads down at a few large circular desks as they studied. It was beautiful in the same way that Grimmauld Place was. Ancient, oozing pure-blood. Not like the haphazard comfort of Gryffindor tower.

"Most of our roommates will not be back just yet. They will be in the library," Abraxas explained. He walked down the small set of steps, black polished shoes making little noise. "This is our common room. Professor Slughorn holds a meeting twice a week, just after dinner. All Sytherins are expected to attend and he will meet with you twice during each term to check your progress."

Harry chewed the inside of his lip as he followed the strangely-welcoming Malfoy. Professor McGonagall didn't catch up or hold common room meetings. Did the Ravenclaws and Hufflepuffs have this? Was it a tradition that Snape held as well?

Abraxas smiled at the confusion etched on the raven-haired boy's face. "A lot of us are from pureblood families. They all know Professor Slughorn and he keeps tabs on our welfare and education to stay in contact with our parents." The smile grew slightly darker at the edges. "Though probably more connection-building from his end."

You are talented, famous, and powerful — everything Horace values. Professor Slughorn is going to try to collect you, Harry. You would be his crowning jewel. Dumbledore's words rang in his mind. In his time, Harry Potter was exactly that. A pawn put in place to secure the ex-Potions Professor. Now here, in the past, Hadrian Peverell was a nobody. It would allow him to sink under the radar, bide his time until Dippet and he found a way back.

Abraxas took him through an archway to a corridor with a strip of glass on the curved ceiling to show more of the Lake. Harry remembered being in those cold depths in his fourth year, the faces of the merfolk…

"This is us." There was a snake on the door, slithering across the wood as if it were alive and trapped inside. "The password is 'Parseltongue'."

At the mention of the word, the snake coiled up into a circle before the door swung open, allowing both of them inside. It was quite similar to the Gryffindor boy's dormitory, eight beds were in a circle, each with their individual areas. The frames were made of a dark wood, green and silver hangings from the four poster beds.

"You have the bed between me and Riddle." Abraxas pointed to the bed that was neatly made, no trinkets or belongings out. Just a medium sized chest sat at the foot of his new bed.

"Riddle?" the word left his mouth in a whisper before he could stop it. The horror washed over him.

Abraxas was not looking at him, but walking over to his bed - next to Harry's - and opening his trunk. "Yes." The blonde took a piece of parchment and a quill out, closing his trunk afterwards. "Let's go back to the common room and run down what you know so I can help you catch up."

Harry shifted. "That's really not necessary."

An eyebrow rose as the boy turned towards him. "It is entirely necessary. You have been out of education for who knows how long

and at Slytherin, we aim for the best. Come."

All he wanted was to crawl in that bed, draw the curtains and hope desperately for Hogwarts to send him back to where he belonged. His teeth clenched, holding back a sigh, as he once more followed Abraxas.

Inside the common room, they took a corner of comfortable chairs. Harry took one of the single leather chairs, wincing at the squeak it gave. The fire was burning close to where they sat.

Abraxas took his wand out and murmured a spell at the parchment, which hovered in the air before him with the quill poised ready. Much like Rita Skeeter. "Let us start with *Avifors* ."

"Yes."

Two hours later, they had covered up to Sixth Year Transfiguration, where there were just a small number of gaps. Potions were impeccable, although Harry admitted that it was not a strong area of his. Charms was strong, again a few he had not heard of. History of Magic was appalling; Abraxas had made a remark that the classes were very boring but it was necessary. Astronomy was passable. They were about to move onto Defense against the Dark Arts but a group of boys descended onto the chairs around them.

"First day and Abraxas has you working? Tough." A dark haired boy grinned. "Antonin Dolohov." He held out a hand across the space.

Harry blinked. He was shattered from the endless thinking that Malfoy was making him do. Dolohov was a known Death Eater. Sometimes he found it hard to believe Draco Malfoy was one, let alone these friendly boys. They would massacre many in the future. The first of Voldemort's minions.

Harry bit back his emotions. "Hadrian Peverell." He shook Antonin's hand.

They went around with introductions. There was a boy with strawberry blonde hair and a petulant face - Dorian Mulciber. Elias Nott had shaggy black hair that was slicked back away from his broad face. Silas Lestrange (Bellatrix's grandfather) had wavy dark brown hair and intense dark eyes that seemed to burrow into Harry's skull. The last boy had dirty blonde hair that was pushed back from his handsome face - Cassius Avery.

“So, what was it like on the run from Grindelwald?” Nott asked, leaning forward so that his elbows rested on his knees.

Mulciber whacked Lestrange on the leg with his book. “Don’t be a dolt. His mother just died.”

“What? We all know that’s the story.” Lestrange frowned, rubbing his leg.

“Was he after the mother…or the son?” a smooth voice drifted through.

Harry’s whole body screamed with the want to *run* . His scar tingled again, more of a warm sensation than the splitting agony he was used to. He forced his eyes to rise to meet dark brown. The boy was every bit of the Tom Riddle that Harry met in his Second Year in the Chamber of Secrets, down to the curl on his forehead. Suddenly, he remembered that he was staring at a master of legitimacy. Whether that was a skill Tom Riddle knew already or not, he was not willing to take a chance.

He averted his eyes.

The boys became silent around him. Most of them had their heads bowed slightly, or if not looking up at Riddle with respectful faces.

Harry stood. “It has been a long day. Thank you Abraxas.” Without waiting, he whisked off to the dormitory.

Once inside, he drew in a deep breath and basked in the silence of the room. Could he do this? The murderer of his parents would be sleeping in the bed beside him. One spell and it would all be over…his parents would live. Riddle would be asleep. He would be vulnerable.

Horrified at the dark thoughts, Harry went over to his trunk and looked over what Riddle had sourced him. Elegant clothing - standard - lots of black trousers and a variety of shirts. A couple of blazers, some dated underwear that were quite high up the hips and a pile of his necessary books, with parchment and quills.

Now he had to learn to be Slytherin. Head low, nothing to make him worthy of changing any of history.

***

Sleep had evaded him most of the night, dipping in and out of nightmares and glad that he had put up a silencing charm. Tom Riddle had been in the bed next to him. He was in Slytherin. It was 1943.

Usually, Harry and Ron would roll out of bed, quickly shower and then go down to breakfast where Hermione was already sitting. Often they were very late; Ron was a terrible procrastinator in the morning. Early mornings meant nothing to Harry, especially given what living at Privet Drive was like.

So, Harry had gotten out of bed before all of the other boys, showering at speed before heading down to the Great Hall. He had detoured, going through the still empty corridors until he emerged outside. There was an autumnal mist that shrouded a lot of the castle from view but his heart ached at the sight. It was home, but at this moment he felt alone and rejected from its usually warm embrace.

Harry found a bench and sat down, gathering his timetable out of his robe pocket. It was crammed, with very little independent study. He would have to think productively on how he would conduct his own research on top of Dippet's classes and Malfoy's intense focus on catching him up.

His appetite was basically at zero. With History of Magic first - with Binns of course - it would be easy to not attend. He just got lost. Binns had no clue anyway. There were rumours that even when he was alive, he was just as exciting as he was dead.

After taking in a gulp of cool air, Harry stood and made his way to the library. There was a slow trickle of students making his way over to the Great Hall. A fair few eyes lingered on him but he ignored them.

"Can I help you, Sir?"

He jumped at the voice as soon as he entered the library. A woman stood over a small pile of old books, wearing light blue robes. She had tightly curled hair about her face and must have been in her fifties.

"Sorry, I have catching up to do. I'm the new student...Hadrian Peverell," he uttered, shifting on his feet uncomfortably.

"Breakfast?"

"I, uh...I'm really not hungry."

She gave him a strange look before giving a nod. “Do not make a habit of missing the first meal, Mr Peverell.”

As her head went down to continue her work, Harry began scouring the bookshelves. There were so many books. All the spines of the books seemed to blur after a short time. He had to study a good few shelves more than twice. More than once he eyed the Restricted Section. Surely Dippet would allow him access to conduct his research. It was something to chase up with the man later.

Harry found a promising, newish looing book with the title: *The Trouble with Time* . He had settled down into a chair, flicking through the pages. There were lots of different stories of possible time travellers. One stood out. Eloise Mintumble had been experimenting with time travel for the Ministry in 1899 when she had been transported back to the 1400s. When they brought her back, she aged five decades despite only being in the past five days. Some of her relatives disappeared - a process they dubbed ‘un-born’. There had been research done by a Professor Croaker. Perhaps Harry could write to him.

“Hadrian.”

He closed his eyes and breathed a curse at the Headmaster’s voice.

“You are late to your class.”

Harry sighed and looked at the man. Today he wore navy robes with a visible silver waistcoat underneath. A small, old fashioned silver pocket watch dangled from a pocket inside the man’s robes.

“I found some information.”

Dippet strode over and snatched the book from Hadrian’s hands, ignoring the boy’s protests. “You are not to speak of this outside my Office,” the man warned. He looked at the cover of the book. “I will take you to Professor Binns.” The Headmaster pocketed the book.

“I don’t have any time to actually research anything,” Harry complained as they navigated out of the library.

“We will discuss this later. For now, you are to attend class.”

Harry hung his head as Dippet marched him through empty corridors until they arrived at Binns’ door.

“I expect you to be present at breakfast each morning.” Dippet pushed the door open.

Binns took no notice. He was alive - flushed skin and all, but that same monotonous voice droned over the pupils sat there. Harry decided there and then that Hogwarts hated him. It sent him back to be a pupil alongside his parent’s murderer, and he had to continue to sit through more of Binns’ droning.

There was one spare space to sit.

Harry refused to move. Dippet pushed him inside. He let out a gasp as the momentum carried him into the classroom, drawing more attention. The door slammed shut.

The steady droning at the front of the classroom stopped. “Ah, Mr Peverell, glad you found your way. Please, have a seat beside Mr Riddle.”

Harry’s movements were wooden as he forced himself to walk over. He slid into the desk, sitting precariously on the edge of the bench, the warm tingle back on his scar.

Binns continued his stream of information. Something about Veela hierarchies. At least it wasn’t about more Goblin wars.

Emerald eyes slid to where pale, elegant fingers were writing notes on a long piece of parchment. Riddle was not listening to the Professor at all, but had a book in front of him. The boy was making his own notes. On what? From where he sat, it was too difficult to read but he saw some of the small diagrams of some kind of runes he remembered seeing in Hermione’s Ancient Runes work.

The lesson went on...and on...and on. Harry saw that all of his Housemates were working on their own pieces, books open and heads down like they were recording what Binns was saying. They were with Ravenclaws, who also were working hard. The absolute opposite to the Gryffindor approach.

By the end, his buttocks ached from where it had uncomfortably straddled the side of the bench. Binns disappeared into his office promptly after, probably to have a snooze.

“Hadrian.” Abraxas approached. “Did you get lost?”

Harry gave a nod. “I woke up really early, and I needed a walk to

clear my head."

"Abraxas," interjected a smooth voice. "Leave us."

"No." The word flew from his lips. Harry flushed as the Slytherins gave him an incredulous look. "I cannot be late again," he lied. Still, he did not look at Riddle.

"There is a short break between our lessons."

Harry began to walk, eyes on the escape, but cool fingers took his wrist, halting his motions. A choked gasp escaped him as a strange warmth gathered in his head and chest. This was definitely different. Emerald eyes dropped down to the hand and the remaining air left him. On that pale hand, a thick gold ring sat there, a black shiny stone in the center with a strange triangle symbol etched into it. *He had already killed his father, grandfather and grandmother* .

"Let go of me," he breathed.

When that hand tightened, he looked up into Tom Riddle's face. The other boy looked at him with a mixture of confusion and something else - interest maybe? Harry swallowed the bile that rose in his throat.

There was the sound of people leaving, until it was just Riddle and him left.

"Who *are* you?" Riddle whispered.

"Hadrian Peverell," he uttered, his wrist hurting with the tight grip the other boy had him in. "I will ask you once more to let me go."

"Or what?" Tom Riddle sneered, leaning his head down so there were mere centimeters between their faces. Before Harry could retort, cinnamon eyes lifted to the scar, which was itching now under his ruffled hair. "A curse scar?"

"No!" Harry gasped.

Riddle flew back into the desk, releasing Harry as the raven haired boy's magic reacted violently. Harry ran out of the classroom before the other boy could react. What had he done?

Chapter End Notes

What did you think?!

Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

Thank you all for your lovely comments!

I struggled a little with this chapter - just wanted to get it up, and if there are any errors, please say. I will review it properly tomorrow.

Enjoy!

“What is your issue with Tom?”

Harry wiped the sweat from his forehead as Avery dropped the newt’s eyes into the bubbling cauldron. “I don’t want to talk about it.”

The potion turned a thick grey and both boys started to finely slice some knotgrass on their respective boards. Inside the classroom, the heat was stuffy, reducing most of the students to remove their outer robes. Harry rolled his sleeves up and returned to cutting.

“So, are you a pureblood?”

He sighed. “Half-blood.”

There was the sound of a cleared throat behind them, but Harry focused on his cutting. A small silence hung between the boys for a moment. Avery finally gave a hum. “Your mother, was she a witch?”

Harry chewed his bottom lip. The lie was painful. He never really knew his mother. She wasn’t even a distant memory, but simply reduced to a few moving photographs and stories.

“Yes.”

It would go with the story - how could Harry know so much about the magical world if he was on the run with a muggle? It was an answer he had rehearsed during the night between nightmares. Being in Slytherin, blood purity would be a sure subject to come up.

Avery placed down his knife and added his selection of cut knotgrass into the cauldron. He gave it one counter-clockwise stir. Harry then added his in, with a clockwise stir. The surface of the potion stilled for a heartbeat before simmering once more. Now time to wait before

adding the next steps.

“It must be hard...losing her and moving here to a new school,” Avery said quietly, as they both sat on the bench next to each other, recording their actions on their parchment.

Harry nodded, making a noise of affirmation in the back of his throat.

“A lot of us have lost someone.” Avery’s elegant scrawl made Harry’s look animalistic. “Here you could have a fresh start, make something of yourself. Your lineage is noble and your name should carry strength despite being half-blood. Just a word of advice though, whatever you have against Riddle, you need to end it now. Don’t make an enemy of Tom Riddle.”

“Is that a threat?”

Avery gave a dry chuckle. “Just some friendly advice.” He peered over the side of the cauldron. “You must have had a good tutor in potions.”

Harry raised an eyebrow to himself, lips quirking up in amusement. “My tutor hated my guts.”

“Well, sometimes we work best under pressure.” Avery shrugged. “Abraxas told us that you were into quidditch...a seeker. You have the right build. Thinking about trying out?”

“I want to catch up on everything first.”

“Fair enough.” Avery leaned over and took Harry’s parchment, despite the protest from him. Blue eyes studied his notes. “You need to re-write these and make it neater. If you want good marks for this, you also need to work on your phrasing. Make it concise.”

Harry muttered a ‘thank you’ and then scanned over the scrawl. Once he read through them, he could see the errors and inconsistencies. No wonder Snape hated his essays. He barely managed to write them in time, let alone look over them first. Ron had looked over his work a few times, but only to copy down information.

He still had ten minutes before adding the next steps. Harry took another piece of parchment and re-drafted his notes that Professor Slughorn had requested of them at the end. This time, he took more time on making his writing more legible and by the end, he had something that looked and read a lot better.

Avery gave him a smile. “Much better.”

For the rest of the lesson, Harry made an effort to follow the Slytherin’s advice. By the end he was shocked to see how different it looked. It was not Hermione’s standard, but much better than his usual submissions. The potion went well, even without the Half Blood Prince’s book, which was now stashed away in his trunk. He avoided the left hand side of the class, positioning his body away so he did not have to look at Tom Riddle.

“Cassius, thank you for your help,” Harry said, as they decanted the potion into vials.

The boy gave him a shy smile. “I am glad it helped, Hadrian.”

Professor Slughorn took in their parchments, dismissing them once he had them in his hands. Potions had been a double lesson, and his hunger had grown. He left with Avery, Abraxas and Silas Lestrange, feeling a little lighter in step.

“I’m thinking about asking Druella to Hogsmeade,” Lestrange said, giving all three of them a wink with his crazed eyes.

Abraxas laughed. “Druella Lazenby? Are you mad?”

Lestrange paced a few steps in front of them as they strolled through the dungeon, walking backwards so he could see the boys. “Since coming back from summer, have you *seen* her? Come on Cassius, you know what I mean.”

“Not my type,” Cassius replied, a slight curl to his lip.

“Well, do you think she’ll say yes?”

“Stairs,” Abraxas said.

Silas turned around before his ankles hit the bottom of the stairs. They strode up the staircase and up to the Entrance Hall where the students were filing into the Great Hall. The rich scents of bread, meat and fruit stretched into the air and stirred up Harry’s hunger further.

“Do you think so?”

“What?” Abraxas asked.

Silas released a frustrated sound. “Druella!”

“Just ask her,” came the monotonous reply. “If she says no, you could always ask Eileen Prince.”

At Abraxas’ words, the boys broke into a fit of muffled laughs as they entered the hall. Harry blinked, the cogs in his brain turning. *Eileen Prince* ? Maybe she had something to do with the Half-Blood Prince. The surname was strange enough, if it was a play on a name. It was either that or someone had an ego the size of a giant. Maybe Hermione had been right about the book after all. It was dangerous. Look what it had done to Malfoy. The last time he got mixed up with a book, it had ended up being part of Riddle. He should have learnt from his previous mistake. Now this seemed to be his punishment.

***

Lunch had been a mostly pleasant affair. There had been some speculation on where Tom Riddle was, by his friends, but it was short lived. They had been joined by Mulciber and Dolohov half way through and all of them had engaged on the topic of quidditch. Apparently, there was a match at the weekend between Slytherin and Gryffindor and the rivalry was just the same in this period of time. All of them had informed Harry of how obnoxious and arrogant the Gryffindors were, pointing out a few students - some with names he knew and some he didn’t. He had to keep neutral, keeping his irritation away for the sake of his cover.

After that, there had been Care of Magical Creatures with Kettleburn. They had been studying Moke and their many magical uses.

Once the day was over and dinner was done (Tom Riddle missing from last lesson and dinner) he had returned to Dippet’s office.

“Now, Mr Peverell, we will start your occlumency lessons straight away.” Dippet observed as Harry winced. “You have had them before?”

“Yes. My teacher despised me and it was awful.”

“Nevertheless, with the current worries around Grindelwald and his forces rising, it is best we keep your secrets of the future to a minimum.”

“Won’t you see them? You will see them in my mind.”

Dippet stroked his beard, eyes fixed on him. “And you trust me with them?”

Harry shifted, emerald eyes roaming around the familiar walls and unfamiliar decorations. “You are the Headmaster.”

“And you think that means you can trust me?”

The lump in his throat was hard to swallow. He wanted to say ‘of course’ but the look the older wizard was giving him was screaming that was the wrong answer. How much did he know about Dippet? Little to nothing. How much did he know about Dumbledore?

“You must have either been a Gryffindor or a Hufflepuff,” Dippet breathed, shaking his head. “Remember Hadrian, everyone has their own agenda. When it comes time to actively practice Occlumency then we will make an Unbreakable Vow that whatever I hear or see, shall not be passed on to anyone else without your permission. For now, we need to work on clearing your mind. How well do you fare under mind magic?”

“Like the *Imperius* ? I can fight it off,” he replied.

The Headmaster’s eyes wavered to the boy’s curse scar before humming. “A very strong skill. The first two nights, I want you to use my Office to clear your mind. Until we have that basic step, we can go no further.”

Harry pulled a face. “Clear my mind? I’m not very good at that, Sir.” He adjusted his glasses on the bridge of his nose.

“Why do you wear those? You are awfully young.”

“What? My glasses? I’ve always had them.”

Dippet made another sound before rummaging in a drawer. “I have nothing against spectacles, apart from that they leave a witch or wizard highly impaired in any conflict if they are broken.” He drew out a vial, pushing it across the table. “Take this before bed. Tomorrow your eyes will ache, but leave your glasses off.”

“There is a cure?” Harry took the potion with a smile that hid a lot of his annoyance. Annoyance at who? Why had no one ever mentioned it? When had he seen a student with glasses?

“I cannot promise your eyesight will not deteriorate with age and there may become a time you will have to wear your spectacles again. Tomorrow you have a medical examination with Healer Roberts in the Infirmary, as standard practice when new students join us.”

Harry chewed his bottom lip. So many things had changed with Dumbledore’s tenure as Headmaster. Since when had students received medical examinations? Or, he should really ask when they stopped having them. Maybe the scars and bruises would have been spotted and maybe, just maybe…

“Hadrian?”

He blinked.

“Go sit in the corner.” Dippet waved over to a plush set of pillows set out by a bookcase. “What your tutor should have gone through is that in order to clear your mind, you have to come to a certain peace with yourself. You have to let go of things that are not in your control and not your responsibility. Do not dwell on the past, live in the present.”

Harry stood and gave the man a droll look. “Very funny.” When he received a nonchalant shrug, he walked over to the pillows and sat. Dippet started to read an old book, jotting down notes in the margins every so often.

Giving a slight huff, Harry rested back against the stone wall, the smell of the nearby books wafting up to his nose. He allowed his eyes to drift closed. Everything was a jumble - an amalgamation of different strings of thoughts, some in knots and some drifting loose ends. Coming to peace with himself appeared impossible. Here, in the past, he was a nobody. Harry Potter, the boy-who-lived did not exist yet. There was nobody to tell him what his next steps were.

Harry’s breath caught.

There was no one to give him directions...or orders. Dippet was unlike Dumbledore.

Dumbledore…

In the future, Dumbledore was a wizened man, with power and knowledge. But it was Dippet’s words that repeated in the back of his head: ‘ *And that means you can trust me’* ? In a few words, he had been made to question everything. Dumbledore was a grandfatherly figure who supported him and gave him advice. Or orders. Harry was a

soldier in the war - the Chosen One. Sixteen years old. He expected to die. A sixteen year old wizard against Voldemort? Regardless of the prophecy, it was ridiculous.

It always felt like Dumbledore knew something he did not.

Everything was different now. There were no expectations upon him apart from to study and do well. Just like a normal sixteen-year-old.

He released a breath he did not realise he had been holding.

Harry Potter did not exist here. He fell into the jumble of his thoughts.

“Hadrian?”

His eyes cracked open, blinking multiple times to clear away the fog. “Yes, Sir?”

“It is time for you to head back to your dormitory.” Dippet did not look up, dipping his quill in ink before writing something on his book. “Tomorrow, same time please.”

Hadrian stood up, knees protesting. How long had he been there? A clock on the desk revealed that it was half an hour before curfew. He muttered a ‘thank you’ before taking the vial on the desk, and heading downstairs.

He felt in a slight daze as he walked down the many staircases, which were quite empty of students. The corridors of Hogwarts were a familiar maze, before he descended into the dungeons and into the Slytherin common room. In a world of his own, he walked through, not taking anything in.

“Hadrian.”

He stopped. Tom Riddle sat alone in the common room, on a wing-backed chair in front of the burning fire. The flames threw amber light across the boy’s handsome features. His long, pale fingers closed the book that was on his lap.

“Please, sit down.”

At the silky, soft voice, Hadrian swallowed. “I’m tired.”

“I wish to...apologise.” That hand gestured to the chairs around him.

There was no way that he was going to obey Tom Riddle’s wishes. “I

will stand thanks."

Something flickered in those cinnamon eyes before his lips curled into a smile. "I believe we have gotten off on the wrong foot." He stood and walked over.

Hadrian stood his ground, chin rising a little as Riddle came closer. Magic seemed to cling to the future-Dark Lord, its tendrils wrapping around him and trying to pull him in… The boy was taller than him by just under a head.

A hand was offered to him. "Tom Riddle."

Once more he was taken back to that moment with Draco Malfoy... Hadrian took the hand. It was surprisingly warm, unlike the other day. But he could feel the ring press against his fingers. His magic gave a jolt as the tingling in his scar grew. Emerald eyes widened as he looked up into confused brown eyes.

Hadrian withdrew his hand, stepping back. His cheeks were flushed with colour. "I need to go to bed." He hurried out, rubbing his hand on his robes as he entered the quiet dormitory and headed straight to the bathroom. Sleep, sleep was what he needed...

Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

> Bit quicker update today! I hope you all enjoy and have a good weekend!
>
> I thank you for all your comments, and I love the feedback - it really does spur me on to write a quicker chapter (and I am not alone in the journey!).

Leaning on the edge of his desk, facing the class, Dumbledore spoke in a steady stream about India and its broad history of Transfiguration. All that accompanied was the scratch of quills on parchment as the class dutifully took notes. Hadrian had been scheduled to miss the lesson, but his appointment with the Healer had been moved to Saturday due to a Second year Potions incident.

Hadrian looked up every now and then from his work, to sneak a look at the future Headmaster. There were differences, like the auburn hair that was streaked with grey - much shorter than it was in the future. His purple robes were accompanied by a bright yellow handkerchief poking out of the pocket.

"...and one of the most famous aspects of Transfiguration in India is the Snake Summons Spell. *Serpentsortia* . Often used in the streets of India to draw in tourists for financial reasons but if one reads carefully, ancient manuscripts from Egypt suggest that there was a similar spell used by our wizard ancestors in that part of the world. Mr Malfoy?"

Abraxas cleared his throat. "Could the snakes conjured not injure people?"

"Could Fienfyre not injure or kill? A summoned snake is much like a summoned fire. Yes, it can injure and kill. Ms Greengrass?"

A blonde Slytherin girl sat up straighter in her chair. "Is this not exactly like the Bird Summoning Spell we learnt about last week?"

"Exactly, five points to Slytherin." Dumbledore's blue eyes swept over the class, before lingering on Tom Riddle, who was sitting by himself with his head down as he concentrated on writing. "Although snakes are more dangerous."

Hadrian cocked his head to the side, watching the interaction and the subtly aimed comment. There was a sudden tightening of Riddle's shoulders to show that he had perfectly understood the Professor's words.

"Mr Wood?"

The Ravenclaw pulled down his raised hand. "Can't some wizards talk to snakes?"

Dumbledore hummed. "Yes, yes they can. A very dark gift, said to descend straight from Salazar Slytherin himself. An ancient Greek wizard named Herpo the Foul was one of the first to breed a basilisk and descend into deep, Dark magic."

Hadrian looked down as Dumbledore's eyes moved to him. As a master Legilimens, it was dangerous to look the other man directly where his thoughts could be read.

"For the workshop today, we will be conjuring snakes using the spell *serpensortia* under careful conditions. It is a very dangerous spell and as Defense against the Dark Arts requires, we need to learn how to counter it. As this is a Transfiguration spell, it falls under my tutelage."

Hadrian felt his hand rise before he fully understood what he was doing.

"Mr Peverell?"

He shifted in his seat. "Who decides on what a dangerous spell is? Surely conjuring a snake is no worse than levitating someone over a bridge using a levitation charm?"

"Levitation charms cannot lift a person, Mr Peverell."

"I know the levitation charms lift the clothes, and not the person but a spell taught to First years can be equally dangerous. You can still hurt a person by levitating the clothes they are in."

"Well, Mr Peverell," Dumbledore replied, voice tighter than it was before, "luckily that is a very rare circumstance indeed."

"Rare or not, it could be used to kill - exactly like the venom of a snake."

There was a hush across the classroom.

Dumbledore's lips pursed. "Interesting thoughts Mr Peverell, but clearly someone has to be very Dark to kill someone in such a way. A very *rare* circumstance. Meanwhile, a snake contains venom that can directly kill. Why else would someone conjure one?"

"Whilst I agree that a snake *can* kill, it really is no different to a lot of the spells we are taught. At least you can counter it if you know the counter spell, like we are taught. If you are in a full body-bind curse that we learn early on, then you cannot counter it. You die if the caster wants you to...as you are utterly helpless. How is that any different to venom?"

Green eyes flickered to see Riddle openly staring at him.

"We should resume the class," Dumbledore dismissed.

"Snakes are just animals, Professor Dumbledore. Summoned birds could be equally-"

"Ten points from Slytherin for trying to detract from the teaching." Dumbledore stood up, raising his eyebrows at the sudden chatter of the class. "Now, the counter for the *serpensortia* spell is *vipera evanesca* . You are to try the spell and counter with your wand the first time, and then you will move onto trying to cast both of them non-verbally."

Hadrian's temper simmered at Dumbledore, his knuckles whitening. They had been simple questions. An older, more mature Dumbledore would have taken his questions and answered them. He would have been patient and heard Harry out. But it wasn't like that here. Here, Dumbledore did not know him. Here, he was just another Slytherin.

His classmates stood from their desks and moved into the part of the classroom that was open for casting magic. Dumbledore had set up translucent boxes that they were to cast in, for safety reasons.

Hadrian moved to the back of the room, furthest from Dumbledore. He was not surprised to see Riddle following him, setting up next to him. However, he ignored the boy, still annoyed at the closing down of his questions. Ever since Dippet's questioning, it had spurred something on in him. He would have never thought to question Albus Dumbledore.

"*Serpentsortia*," he murmured. A beautiful adder appeared in his box,

tongue flitting out between its teeth as it looked at him. “ *Vipera evanesca* .” It disintegrated.

Something touched his leg.

Hadrian looked down to see a long snake starting a journey up his leg, thick head arching back to look at him as its body undulated around his limb. It reminded him of the friendly snake in the zoo that he let loose.

“ *Do not bite* ,” came a smooth instruction next to Hadrian. Parseltongue.

The snake’s head moved, taking in Riddle before continuing to wrap around Hadrian’s body. Hadrian reached down, running his fingers over the slick scales of the summoned creature. It was a muddy brown in colour, yellow eyes vivid and searching.

“You are not afraid, Hadrian?”

The voice was too close, the tingle in his scar too warm. He shook his head as he looked at the snake. “No.”

Suddenly, the snake disappeared. Hadrian jolted at the sudden lightness of his being. He turned, to see Riddle give him a look unlike any other before the boy turned on his heel and returned to his desk. Riddle was writing furiously and Dumbledore all but ignored him, probably due to the Professor laughing along with a group of three Ravenclaws.

Hadrian frowned. He then returned to his box, performing the spell non-verbally after a few attempts. Before he had ended up in the past, all of his Professors were encouraging them to perform non-verbal spells. Harry had soon picked up that it was all about the motive and concentration. This spell was simple but his aim was wandless magic. He just had to master the non-verbal first.

The rest of the class were managing the spells, a few succeeding - like Hadrian - to complete it non-verbally. Dumbledore brought it to a close and they resumed working at their desks to document their learning.

***

“Have you tried to tame this?”

Hadrian flushed as the girl played with his hair. Adelia Greengrass sat on the arm of his chair. “Yes, it doesn’t want to be tamed.” He tried pulling his head away but it only made her giggle.

“I quite like it,” Abraxas commented. “Windswept.” He moved his rook, trapping Hadrian’s pawn.

Dorian Mulciber snorted from where he was sitting, proofreading over Silas Lestrange’s Charms essay. “Windswept? It has a life of its own.”

“Hadrian, do you fancy going to Hogsmeade tomorrow with me?” Adelia asked. She was beautiful, she really was. In a classic way, with blonde hair wrapped elegantly around her head in fashionable rolls and pale skin that glowed. Ginny had barely been a passing thought since the last couple of days events and it shocked him a little by how much he did not mind.

“I have some work to do in the library,” he replied, moving his knight to counter Abraxas. “I am sorry.”

Adelia sighed. “Only here a couple of days and already buried in the library. If you change your mind, just let me know.” She leaned down to give him a brush of her lips on his cheek.

The guys stared after her from the corner of the common room as she flounced back to her group of friends.

“You dolt,” Antonin breathed, whacking Hadrian’s head with his letter as he passed, to sit with the boys. “You turned down Adelia Greengrass? For the library?”

Hadrian rolled his eyes, wincing as Abraxas moved his queen, smashing his knight to pieces. It had already been a long evening, going to Dippet’s office after dinner to try and clear his mind. Although it was getting easier, he still had a lot of work to do. His homework from the Headmaster was to practice in different areas of the castle - to work on suddenly clearing his mind. They were going to break from the class for the weekend and resume Monday. In the last half an hour, both Dippet and he had crafted more of his backstory. As the Peverells were long dead, it was easy to create a flimsy story around secret relationships. Dippet had warned him about saying too much, not to overcompensate.

Riddle was missing. Once more, the boy had disappeared after dinner.

Hadrian was concerned. What if Riddle was already constructing his first horcrux? Well, if he was, it wasn't as if he could stop him. It would disrupt the timeline.

At Silas' laugh at Antonin's comment, Hadrian threw him a look. "And I suppose you asked Druella?"

Silas flushed a deep pink. "No - I was - I mean…" he trailed off, his blush deepening.

The boys laughed. Hadrian grinned.

"Hey, can we talk about how you pissed off Dumbledore?" Lestrange said, desperately trying to change the subject away from his failed romantic venture. "He was completely backed into a corner. And it makes a change that it wasn't Tom for once."

Cassius Avery looked up from his book. "Dumbledore hates us Slytherins; it's no surprise he found a way to take points from a new snake."

"Yeah, but trying to force Dumbles to justify the dangers of Light and Dark magic. It was glorious," Silas breathed, his dark eyes gleaming.

Hadrian frowned. "That wasn't what I was doing. I was questioning the logic."

Abraxas sat back in his chair, sipping his goblet of pumpkin juice. "But that was exactly what you were doing, Hadrian. I think the questioning of the logic behind *who* deems what is dangerous or not, is crucial. As you said, a body-bind curse could kill, so why is that supported to study but not the cruciatus curse?"

He barely managed to repress a shudder, aware of the Slytherin's eyes upon him, at the mention of the Unforgivable. Hadrian moved his pawn, knowing he was losing. He needed to spend more time thinking through his moves first. "A cruciatus curse is torture," he said.

"I have heard of quite some...pleasurable sides of a *crucio* ," Cassius replied lightly.

All of the boys froze.

Cassius' mouth pulled into a slow smile. "Some people like it." He

shrugged.

Hadrian shook his head, blinking at the bizarre change of conversation.

Abraxas cleared his throat. “Checkmate.” The word broke the awkward silence that had descended upon the corner.

The raven-haired boy rose to his feet. “Good game. I’m off to bed.”

They said their goodnights, Abraxas joining him in getting ready for bed. In the bathroom, Hadrian took a long shower, trying to rid himself of the day. It ended up waking him up a little more, so he tugged on his loose pyjamas and walked into the dormitory.

Abraxas was in his nightwear, climbing into bed. He offered a small smile to him as he walked past.

Hadrian opened his trunk and placed his folded clothes. He caught sight of a familiar dark-covered book and quickly closed it. Instead, his eyes flitted to Riddle’s empty bed.

“You have to excuse Tom. He likes his own space,” Abraxas said quietly from his bed. “He takes getting used to, but he is an incredible wizard.”

He chewed on his lower lip, checking out the lack of personal possessions out on Riddle’s bedside cabinet. Everything was very orderly, only a tiny, charmed snake floating in their air in a never ending spiral. “It is fine,” he replied, throat tight. Whatever had spooked Riddle, spooked him. If something had startled the future Dark Lord, then Hadrian needed to worry.

After getting into bed, curiosity had already seized him and he retrieved the beaten copy of ‘Advanced Potions’. He placed his glasses on his pillow and then remembered the vial Dippet had given him, that he forgot all about last night.

It was not too long that Hadrian was lost in the spidery scrawl of the Half Blood Prince's notes.

Chapter 6

Chapter Notes

Sorry this took longer - had some work to do!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

To say his eyes were aching was an understatement. It felt as if someone was taking an ice cream scoop to the back of his eyeballs. It made concentrating on anything a chore, and all Hadrian wanted to do was to sleep it off. But he had the appointment with the Healer.

“Please, Mr Peverell, if you can just sit on the bed.” Healer Roberts strode through the Medical Wing, gesturing to a bed as he flicked through a series of parchments in his hands. “I will be with you in a moment.”

Hadrian walked over to the crisp, white sheets stretched over the metal frame. He allowed his gaze to wander the open Wing. There were two students conversing in beds next to each other, faces covered with bandages and red blotches on their hands. They must have been the Second years involved in the Potions incident.

What surprised him the most was the fact that not much had changed. The bedframes were still the old-fashioned metal ones, the ones he used to see on TV when Uncle Vernon was watching some old war drama. In most instances, this was the same castle, but without the people he knew and recognised. The walls were the same, but the feeling of ‘home’ was diminishing by the day.

The Healer wandered back over, parchment floating beside him with a quill poised to write. Healer Roberts was a bald, elderly gentleman with a uniform that matched the bedsheets. “Right, Mr Peverell, can you just talk me through your medical history please, starting from birth.”

Hadrian swallowed. “Medical history? Like what?”

“Anything requiring a healer and any inoculations.”

“I had my arm broken in quidditch...and then they were de-boned by accident so it had to be grown back. I fell off my broomstick another time, and had to spend a weekend resting.” He watched the Healer’s quill scribble away.

“And?”

“And what?”

“Inoculations.”

“What are they?” His cheeks were hot with embarrassment.

“Vaccinations against diseases like spattergroit, testing of allergies et cetera,” Roberts explained.

“No.”

“Muggle ones?”

Dudley had jabs at the doctors and at their Primary school, but Hadrian had always been exempted by the Dursleys, claiming he had already had them. He may have had one against measles, but he really did not remember.

“No, not that I know of.”

Brown eyes stared at him for a long moment. “I will have to run a diagnostic spell just to establish any gaps.” His eyes flicked up to the scar on his forehead.

Hadrian swallowed. “Is that necessary?”

“It is the Ministry’s instructions to all, to safeguard the children under our care.”

His back stiffened as the Healer’s brown fingers took his wand out from his pocket. A slight sweat broke out on his forehead as the wand was swept along his feet and up to his hair in a slow movement.

Hadrian could not look at the other male. His feet swung a little from the side of the bed, where they did not reach the floor. He had never reached the towering height of Ron. Years of living in a cupboard would do that.

“Mr Peverell, we need to talk over these findings, and I will be requesting Headmaster Dippet be present,” came the soft voice of the Healer.

Hadrian frowned as the Healer strode away, the parchment clutched in his hands as he strode over to his office. What could the man have found? It was not as if Harry was littered with broken bones and scars

from numerous other injuries at school. There were odd beatings from Dudley, especially after he got his Smeltings stick and then the beatings from Dudley's gang.

After a few minutes, the Healer came back out, this time accompanied by the Headmaster. Both were conversing in hushed voices. Hadrian clasped his sweaty hands together in his lap. Dippet pulled out his wand and cast a protective curtain around the bed, sealing all three men inside. He then conjured up two wooden chairs to sit opposite Hadrian, giving him enough space.

"Hadrian - there were quite a few things we need to talk through that appeared on your report," Roberts started. He must have duplicated the report, as he handed one to Dippet. "If you don't mind, we need you to clear up a few issues. We will start from the easiest I believe to clear up."

He did not nod, or blink...or move. Hadrian was frozen in place.

"You have signs of malnourishment, did you have periods of not having food or access to water?"

Hadrian's eyes flickered to Dippet. "I really don't know what I can tell you."

Dippet tapped his finger on the parchment as a contemplative expression seized his placid face. "Healer Roberts is one of my closest friends."

He breathed in deeply. "I just don't know what to say. This is really no big deal." Emerald eyes pleaded with Dippet. "I don't know what to say, with the situation that landed me here."

Roberts stood up. "I feel that perhaps it is best that I get what I need from you Armando to make the next steps. I will give you two some space and just wait outside the curtain." He left both of them behind the privacy of the screens.

"Hadrian, this is not the way I wanted to do this. I did not expect the report to look anything like this, and it does change things." The Headmaster leaned back in his chair. "Let me tell you what this says: malnourishment over a large period of years; stunted growth; *multiple* concussions with numerous head injuries; a broken nose...relatively recent; and something that is just unidentifiable, linked perhaps to that curse scar."

Hadrian looked down at his lap. Years of malnourishment at the hands of the Dursleys, stashing him in the cupboard like Petunia's car boot sale china. Locks on the door, stopping him from getting food, unless accidental magic allowed him to break free in the middle of the night to steal some food from the cupboards. The letter addressed: *Cupboard under the stairs.*

"I want an Unbreakable Vow." The words he never knew he would have to use, but Dippet had been right the other evening. Trust was difficult. Besides, not even his friends knew the true extent of it. Ron had seen the bars on his windows but noticed the lack of good, but that was it. Everything was always left unsaid. "And then you need to know everything. Maybe it will give you an idea of why Hogwarts put me here. There is...relevancy in the time she has taken me to."

Dippet frowned, lines marking his forehead like rings on a tree trunk. "I see. Yes." He stood. "I will need Healer Roberts to be our third party."

Hadrian watched him disappear. It took a few moments for the two men to reappear. His leg was bouncing up and down and his stomach squirmed.

"Please stand, Hadrian."

He obeyed the Headmaster's words and took the outstretched hand of the old wizard. His hand was cold and wrinkled.

Healer Roberts drew out his wand. "Do you, Armando Dippet, promise to never share with anyone living, details of Hadrian Peverell's past...or future?"

"I will."

A thin stream of fire emitted from Robert's wand, circling around their hands until Roberts withdrew. The flame sunk into their hands before Dippet withdrew.

"Thank you, William. Hadrian, let's go to my Office and speak."

Hadrian got off the bed, not even noticing that the curtains had been withdrawn. The two second years were staring right at him before devolving into speculative whispers. He sighed, following the dark robes of the Headmaster.

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The moon's gaze lovingly caressed the surface of the still water. A thin stone suddenly skimmed the top, creating a vast number of ripples in its wake before disappearing into the abyss. Something slender poked out of the dark water before rising and growing in width - a giant tentacle.

The sanguine-coloured appendage of the Giant Squid flopped around in the air, its suckers thick and gelatinous as they vellicated in the breeze that spun through the grounds of Hogwarts.

A raven-haired boy sat on top of a large rock, cross-legged as he juggled another flat stone in his palms. His emerald eyes watched the Giant Squid, wondering how long the beast had lived in the watery depths of the Scottish lake. When the tentacle undulated as it disappeared into the water, he was reminded of a story they studied in Primary school about the mystery of the Lock Ness monster. It must be no coincidence that both resided in a Scottish lake.

Long ago, his tears had dried on his cheeks, leaving a tight feeling where the salty droplets had coursed across his skin.

He had spoken about the Dursleys, about his cupboard and the Hogwarts letter addressed to it. Everything had come out...his parents' death, Voldemort, Tom Riddle, his mission from Dumbledore… It was the first time he had spoken the events of his life, and even without watching Dippet's face, he knew what horror the story truly was. A boy, whose parents were killed by a megalomaniac, grows up amongst Muggles and stowed away in a cupboard under some stairs. A hero in the eyes of the wizarding world for surviving the Killing Curse, but who had no idea the treatment behind closed doors. No visit from anyone magical - even though the Dursely's were openly abusive.

Then the mission to him, given by Dumbledore, to help the Headmaster to get rid of Voldemort for good. The horcruxes...

Dippet had listened, never once interrupting Hadrian's train of thought. When he had finished, the other man had been still silent. Then the most surprising thing had happened - the Headmaster had apologised. The wizard had looked older than Hadrian had ever seen him, brown eyes weighted. He had apologised for his childhood, apologised for the neglect from the Muggles and the Wizarding World and apologised for the weight placed upon his young shoulders.

Then Dippet had asked the question that tore through Hadrian. ‘ *Do you really want to return to all of that* ?’

Hadrian had been excused. Both had a lot to think over. How long had he even been outside in the late-October air? Darkness had fallen a long time ago.

The internal battle had raged within him for hours. Of course he wanted to return. His friends and family were all in the future. Ron. Ron and his stupid blindness to Hermione’s feelings. Hermione’s desperate need to be the best, buried in books as she allowed herself to be submerged in knowledge. But Sirius was dead. His parents were dead. Cedric was dead. Dumbedore’s hand was a curse most likely to take his life.

“Mind if I join you?”

Hadrian shrugged his shoulders.

“Everyone was wondering where you were,” Cassius Avery said, as he climbed onto the rock. “Your glasses are gone.”

He nodded.

“It must be tough being here, just going through normal classes after having some crazed man after you,” the other boy noted.

Hadrian gave a slight snort. Cassius was further to the truth than the Slytherin could ever know. It was disconcerting. He was worried about handing in essays on time, of catching up with everyone else. That was usually Hermione’s forte. His vision was always getting rid of Voldemort. Lessons he did not listen to, too interested in seeing if Malfoy had received the Dark Mark or if his new Defense teacher was going to kill him.

“I got you something from Hogsmeade.”

Hadrian frowned, looking at the boy for the first time.

Cassius really was an attractive male. The moon made his pale skin glow, sandy blonde hair pushed back but a few strands falling loose into his dark blue eyes. His lips pulled up into a smile as he took out a metal and glass cage from his pocket, along with his wand. The Slytherin tapped his wand on the metal and the cage grew in size, revealing what was inside.

“W-what?”

Avery handed the cage over. “I thought you might like a companion. We agreed that this suited you - you have the same eyes.”

Hadrian stared at the black snake wrapped up in the middle of the cage. It was half-asleep, green eyes fluttering open and closed. The creature was not that large, small enough to be stashed away in a pocket.

It was beautiful. The onyx scales gleamed.

“You can have a good range of animals as companions here at Hogwarts, so you don’t have to hide her. Not many people like snakes...but you seemed quite fond of them after your debate with Dumbledore.”

He swallowed heavily. Hedwig was in the future, given to him by Hagrid. And here, in the past, he was gifted another animal. “Thank you Cassius, it is beautiful.”

“He is.” Blue eyes met green and held for a long moment.

Hadrian flushed, looking away. “Thank you,” he repeated.

“Come on, let’s go inside and get you warmed up. I think Dorian even demanded a house elf to send some dinner to the common room for you.” Cassius began moving away.

A hand supported the bottom of the cage, not wanting to stir the small snake who dozed inside, as he maneuvered himself off the rock and realised how numb his backside had become. His stomach was knotted with hunger.

Cassius gave him another smile as they wandered across the grounds, the blonde boy filling him in on their Hogsmeade visit and how Silas made a fool of himself in front of Druella by stuttering as he complimented her dress. Hadrian laughed along with the story, imagining Lestrange’s face as they entered the warm castle.

Chapter End Notes

What did you think?

I do have a soft spot for Avery!

Chapter 7

Chapter Notes

I hope you enjoy this chapter - I couldn't stop writing, and well, things change!

Warning for bad language!

"*What isss your name?* " Hadrian asked the snake as it uncurled itself, head rising as it studied him.

"*A ssspeaker? I do not have a name - do I need one?* "

"*It would be good to call you sssomething. Do you have a preference of any name* ?" Hadrian found it a little strange speaking to this small creature whilst in his bed, curtains drawn and a silencing charm thrown up. Hedwig had not been able to converse with him, but she had always seemed to understand him. He had never thought of actively using his parseltongue ability, especially given how students reacted to it in his Second Year. Then again, he was in the same predicament as he could not let Tom Riddle know that he was a parseltongue. He did not want any more unwanted attention from the future Dark Lord.

"*No."*

He opened the cage, and the snake slithered out, black forked tongue poking out in excitement. " *What to name a sssnake?* " Hadrian mused, leaning back against his pillows.

"*Massster I am hungry* ."

A dark eyebrow rose. "*Um, what do you eat?*

"*A niccce placcce like thisss mussst have lotsss of delicccciousss treatsss,* " replied the snake, wiggling its body as it moved along Hadrian's lap.

Hadrian's lips gave an amused tug. " *Yesss it doesss. I will call you Onyx. Can you go and hunt* ?"

"Y*esss. Onyx will know where Massster isss* ."

"*Before you go, I have one rule. I do not want anyone to know I can ssspeak to you yet* ," he explained.

When the snake seemed to nod an affirmative, Hadrian released the silencing spell and drew the curtains of his bed. Due to it being the weekend, some of the other boys were still in bed like Silas and Antonin. Onyx slithered off the bed and out of eyesight.

He got ready for breakfast and as the common room was mostly empty, he wandered down to the Great Hall. Cassius, Abraxas and Tom were already sitting there. Riddle was reading *The Daily Prophet* where the headlines screamed more on Grindlewald's movements. Cinnamon eyes rose briefly before resuming his reading.

"Hadrian, I saved you a space," Cassius said, gesturing to the seat next to him.

Offering the other boy a smile, Hadrian sat down. "Thanks." He poured himself a goblet of pumpkin juice and then plucked a piece of buttered toast up. "And thanks again for the snake. He is really beautiful."

Avery smiled, his eyes lighting up. "I am glad you think so. Where is he?"

"Off hunting I think," he said before biting into his toast.

"Hopefully terrorising some Gryffindors," Abraxas muttered. "Ready for our lessons today, Hadrian?"

Hadrian looked towards the Head table, where Dippet was staring at them. Did the man want to meet and discuss anything? What about his research into time? "I do need to go to the library."

"We were planning on working there anyway." Abraxas smoothed back his white-blonde hair that was tied in a ribbon at his nape. "Did you spend all of yesterday with Dippet? Some second years were claiming something happened in the Hospital Wing with you and him."

He blinked at the question, taking a deep gulp of pumpkin juice. With his cheeks burning, he realised that all three were looking at him - Riddle's paper lowered to his lap. "I just had my medical."

"Abraxas, really?" Cassius said. He picked up an apple. "Give him a break."

Malfoy glared at Avery but before anyone could say anything, there was a scream. A Ravenclaw girl jumped out of her seat, spurring many

others to do the same.

“ *Ssso much noissse - loud flessshy humansss,* ” came an irritated hissing. “ *Massster* .”

Hadrian groaned. He turned to see Onyx slithering over. Shaking his head, he leant down and picked his companion up. He was grateful that the snake did not start chatting to him, but he noted that Onyx was slightly heavier in his hand. There was a chatter that descended across the hall at the sighting of the snake and at Hadrian’s involvement.

Cassius was chuckling to himself. “He is very fond of you.”

Hadrian shook his head. “He is very young.” He gave a pointed look to Onyx, who simply looked at him and started to curl up.

“ *Sssleepy.* ”

Sighing, he pulled out his wand and charmed his robe pocket warm. Hadrian deposited the young snake into his pocket. He froze when he looked up.

There was a look in Tom Riddle’s eyes that he had never seen in any person before. There was a burning, but it wasn’t anger. As Hadrian’s tongue wetted his lower lip, cinnamon eyes followed the movement.

As he continued to eat, Hadrian was aware of the other boy’s constant gaze. He could feel the thick, pressing magic of Riddle across the table. Even as a teenager, he was powerful and he would continue to grow in power to rival even Dumbledore. He rubbed his scar.

“What have you named him?” Cassius asked, as he bit into the shiny green apple with a crunch.

“Onyx.”

“I respect how he just wandered in without a care in the world,” Abraxas commented, as he took the offered newspaper from Riddle. “Maybe Tom could have a word with him so someone does not kill him.”

Hadrian’s heart fluttered. “What do you mean?”

Riddle gave Abraxas an annoyed look, before schooling his face into a more neutral position as he faced Hadrian. “I am a Parselmouth.”

“Oh,” was all Hadrian could get out. Memories of a Tom Riddle - looking exactly like he did now - standing over a young Ginny Weasley’s body in the Chamber of Secrets flashed through his mind. His scar suddenly pulsed and his emerald eyes widened in fear as he saw confusion cross over Riddle’s face.

“What-”

Hadrian stood. “I need to go.” He fled from the Hall and marched down the corridors. What had he done? A stupid, stupid move. There was every sign that Riddle had seen. He had let his guard down, which was why he was a total Gryffindor. The occlumency lessons would resume with Dippet tomorrow, but now he had a target on his back. And what a stupid memory to come to mind.

Stomping through the corridors, he ended up outside the Room of Requirement. He stared at the wall for a long time. “What do you want?” he mumbled, leaning on the wall opposite.

Hogwarts had never seemed like such an enemy before.

***

Abraxas had spent hours going through material, until Hadrian’s head was aching with trying to retain the information. The Malfoy Heir was rigorous in his teaching, more so than Hermione. He had no patience for spelling errors and constantly stressed clarity. However, in a bizarre turn of events, Hadrian found himself wanting to impress his peer. He had an eloquence of expression and an abundance of patience.

The boys had been joined by Cassius and Elias Nott, who were doing some ‘hobby’ reading into Wizarding Law. Onyx had woken an hour ago whilst they were still studying, slithering off to roam around the books somewhere.

When they went down to lunch, Hadrian lied to say he needed to get something from his trunk first. He instead got lost in the stacks of books, trying to find anything on time travel. Where he really needed to be was the Restricted Section. If Tom Riddle had managed to get access, then he must be able to after speaking to Dippet.

"Lost?"

His spine seized from where he stood, back turned to the voice and nestled in some dark corner. "No, just looking for something." Hadrian forced himself to move, a trembling finger skimming the titles of the leather-bound books he had been looking at.

"Anything in particular?"

He was too close. The magic was too heavy, too close to swaddling Hadrian in its dark mass. "Your friends are at lunch," Hadrian commented lightly, not turning around.

"So they are."

Hadrian's breath caught as he felt Riddle's cloak brush his back. "Do you mind giving me some space, Riddle?"

There was a throaty chuckle before a rustle of clothing as the other boy moved away. "I just wanted you to look over something for me."

Hadrian schooled his expression, turning around. Riddle's face was cast in half-shadow in the nook they both stood in. He did not look into the other boy's eyes, averting them to the side as he waited expectantly.

Riddle took a slip of paper out of his pocket, unfolding it before offering it to him. As Hadrian took it, he noted how thick and old the parchment was. He opened it and shrugged his shoulders. "What about it?"

"I could not quite understand the first line, and I saw you wandering around and thought that I could ask you for assistance," Riddle replied smoothly. An elegant, pale finger reached forward and skimmed the line in question.

" *I have often dabbled with the Art of Wandlore, and have found it increasingly problematic that magic is restrained through such an instrument, to which I have started to study the very Core of one's own Magick to see how to wield its power in a more raw state* ," he read aloud. "Well, it's old and difficult to read with the wording, but it just looks like someone studying the constraints of their wand."

At Riddle's silence, Hadrian shifted and held out the parchment, where it was plucked from his fingers.

“Thank you, Hadrian.”

At the purr of his name, his cheeks warmed and he became very aware of the other Slytherin. Riddle smelt good, like the garden at Privet Drive in full bloom, but also something spicy and rich underneath. Didn’t Ginny smell good too? He did not remember anymore. Why was he comparing Ginny to Riddle?

“By the way, I found your new pet about to startle some Hufflepuffs.” Riddle raised his arm, Onyx slithering out of the sleeve.

“ *Warm, sssmellsss like Massster,* ” the snake hissed.

Hadrian blanched in horror, taking his new companion. “Thanks.” He started to shift out of the way, maneuvering past the Slytherin. “Goodbye.”

A hand took his shoulder, stopping him in his tracks. “I’m glad you are enjoying Onyx. He really is a gem.”

Hadrian swallowed and rushed away. Whilst he did so, he swore he could hear a chuckle in his wake.

***

Sipping his tea, Headmaster Dippet looked over at the sixteen-year-old. Sweat plastered some of the dark hair over his forehead as the boy sipped his own cup.

Hadrian frowned as Onyx wriggled out of his pocket, sliding up his robes to nestle over his shoulder. The tea warmed his throat, which was slightly hoarse from the attempts to block the legilimens attacks from the Head. He had gotten better over the last few days, having met the Headmaster Monday, Tuesday and now Wednesday evening for lessons. They had been very business-like, Dippet excusing him when Hadrian was tired or if they had a successful breakthrough. However, the man had asked him to stay and speak for a while tonight.

“How are you settling into Slytherin?”

“Fine.” He winced at his croaky voice.

“You have yourself an interesting collection of friends, given the history,” Dippet commented. “And made quite a spectacle of yourself with your new slithery companion at the weekend.”

He chewed his bottom lip, balancing the cup on his knee as his other hand stroked the glossy scales draped over him. “Yeah. Cassius gave me Onyx. They are...different from what I expected. I expected them to be raving Death Eaters spewing all sorts, but they have been very kind.”

Dippet hummed. “Hadrian, you did very well in throwing me out of your mind this evening. I think if we keep this up, you will find yourself quite an efficient Occlumens. However, I have had quite a lot to think about.”

Hadrian just looked at the man expectantly.

“I believe, piecing together your rough timeline, that Tom probably has already constructed his first horcrux. He potentially has murdered his family, as the Gaunt family are dead...apparently killed by Morfin Gaunt, who is in Azkaban for his crimes. Miss Myrtle Warren was sadly killed last year, and Mr Rubeaus Hagrid expelled.” Dippet paused. “I know you feel strongly about Hagrid but I believe that the time for his exoneration is not yet. We must think logically how to approach this. And this is what I wish to speak to you about.”

“Headmaster-”

Dippet held his hand up for silence. “I have battled with myself over this over the last few days. I know what you have been subjected to in the future by my successor, and I refuse to fall down the same path. You are no pawn. You are a young man. I will always try and be honest with you, Hadrian but I am only human and I have my own motives.”

He really did not like where this conversation was heading. Onyx had picked up on his tension and had slithered down onto his arm, to wrap around him.

“I am afraid that returning to your time will be impossible.” Dippet sipped his tea, allowing the heavy silence to fall between them. “I spoke to my dear friend Professor Croaker at the Department of Mysteries before we made the Vow. His research has gathered that any traveller of time, five hours is the limit of time someone can go back before time is broken. Now, no serious harm has come of yourself, but your presence here will have already altered the timeline

considering the decades you have gone back, and the time spent here already."

"No." Hadrian thumped down the delicate mug on the desk between them. "It doesn't matter. I can't stay here. Just hide me away somewhere until we find the solution."

Dippet grimaced. "It really is not that simple. All time travel has been by a time turner, and this falls out of the usual mechanics. My knowledge of you, despite the Vow, would allow me to try and change things. I do not want the future you speak of."

Hadrian stood up, his body trembling. "You knew. You knew that time would be compromised by me telling you the future, even more so with the Vow."

"Yes."

The paintings on the walls trembled as Hadrian's magic lashed out. A few trinkets fell from the bookcases as the wood vibrated. "You manipulated me."

Dippet's lips became a straight line before he nodded. "I have warned you that you trust too easily. However, I cannot allow the future to be so bleak. Grindlewald has already left so much of a scar on the world."

"What if it's worse?" Hadrian cried out. "Have you even thought about that? What if this causes Grindlewald to survive? What if Riddle never goes after me as a child and succeeds in his plans?"

"Hadrian, the future you speak of has robbed you of your loved ones. Hogwarts placed you here for a reason, maybe this is it."

"Fuck you, and fuck Hogwarts," he hissed.

Hadrian stormed out of the office. A group of Ravenclaws gasped as he swept out from the gargoyle, magic shrouding him like a dark cloak. His head pounded and his very soul burned with injustice. The Slytherin strode down the corridors and into the dungeons, all students who were returning before curfew moving out of his way.

He bit out the password, a flurry of black robes as he whisked inside.

In the common room, it was mostly empty apart from Slughorn with Hadrian's fellow Sixth year boys and a few third years who were

playing gobstones. Hadrian ignored them as they all looked up.

“Mr Peverell, please join us for a tea!” Slughorn said merrily, cheeks ruddy.

“No.”

“Mr Peverell, I must insist as your Head of House!”

Avada kadavra-coloured eyes flashed towards the stout Potions Professor. “I must *insist* that you fuck off, Professor,” Hadrian bit out, before marching out into the dormitory. Once inside, he threw the curtains around him and erected the strongest shielding charm he could muster.

He released the scream that had lodged in the base of his throat, his magic spiralling out of him and tearing the sheets to shreds all around him, leaving his bed in disarray. In chaos around him.

Chapter 8

Chapter Notes

This chapter had a bit of a life of it's own...

“Hadrian?”

He buried his head in his ruined pillow. “Go away,” he mumbled.

“Let me in.”

He released the shield from the curtains. There was a rustle as the curtains parted and then the bed dipped a little as another person climbed on. Hadrian heard a muttered spell and felt the bed coverings fix themselves underneath him.

An arm slid over his waist, and then a warm body pressed against his. Hadrian blinked at the feeling of being in someone’s arms, being held. Ron and he had never been this close to each other. None of the boys in Gryffindor had ever hugged each other. It just wasn’t a done thing.

“It’s lunchtime, and I brought you some food just in case you were hungry,” Cassius whispered, his breath a warm tickle on the back of Hadrian’s neck. “But if not, we could talk...or just stay like this. Whatever makes you feel better.”

Hadrian squeezed his eyes shut. The pain and anger that had festered within him all night and morning, started to ease, as if Cassius was drawing it from him. In its place was a hollow feeling that seemed to claw its way into his very soul.

They stayed like that for a long while. Minutes...hours...Hadrian had no idea. “Don’t you have lessons?” he asked, voice hoarse from screaming and his lack of sleep.

“I can catch up.”

Hadrian sighed before he started to become acutely aware of the boy’s arm around his waist - the weight of it and its positioning. It was an intimate position. Cassius’ legs were against his, although above the duvet, as the other Slytherin spooned him. No one had ever been this physically close to him.

“Have you seen Onyx?” he whispered.

“Tom has him. He was off hunting and found him at breakfast.”

Hadrian groaned.

“He loves snakes, so he will be in good hands.” There was a pause. “Hadrian, your magic is truly beautiful. Last night...”

His body stiffened as his mind snapped over the events that had occurred overnight. He shifted out of Avery’s arms, and for the first time saw the other boy’s face as he turned on his back. Cassius’ handsome face was close to his, blonde hair slightly mussed from the bed. Both stared at each other for long moments.

Suddenly, the curtains were pulled back. Hadrian jolted, glaring as he sat up in bed.

“Rise and shine!”

“Piss off, Lestrange,” Cassius said, although there was little malice in his voice.

Silas and Dorian clambered onto the bed, shrugging off their school robes to their shirts and trousers.

“No way,” Silas replied, a twinkle in those dark eyes. “Do you know how long I have been waiting to speak to Hadrian? The whole of the school is talking about you.”

Hadrian’s mouth twisted, grabbing his pillow and stuffing it against the headboard to lean on. He had chucked off his shirt and robes last night, which were in a mess still at the foot of the bed. Trouserless, he became aware that he was just wearing his underwear under the duvet. He lifted the duvet to cover his stomach and chest.

Cassius remained lying down next to him, moving onto his back and pillowing his head on folded arms.

“Apparently you stormed out of Dippet’s office - snake on your shoulder and everything.” The gleam in Silas’ eyes deepened. “Half of the school wants to slip you a love potion, and the other half thinks that you are Grindlewald’s secret son.”

Hadrian rolled his eyes when all of the boy’s eyes turned to him expectantly. “My father’s a Muggleborn, not some psychopath. And very dead. Killed by Grindlewald.”

“You were owning that Dark Lord vibe. I think Slughorn shit his trousers,” Dorian chuckled. “So, you are a half-blood?”

The question was asked lightly, but a heaviness draped itself around each individual word. Hadrian frowned. “Yes. Is there a problem?”

“Dorian-”

The Slytherin cut Cassius off, “Just that it is interesting you are so powerful given your blood status.”

Silas crossed his legs, dark hair wild around his face. “Why did the Peverell’s dirty the blood with a Muggleborn?”

Hadrian’s jaw clenched. His mother - the true Muggleborn - was a witch renowned by all the people who had known her. She had died young, just twenty-one, but even in those short years she had charmed all of those around her with her eyes and magical ability. It was Draco Malfoy that had spewed the term ‘Mudblood’ for the first time in his presence. “I do not appreciate you calling my blood ‘dirty’, Lestrange.”

“What are you going to do about it, Peverell?”

“Duel.”

All eyes turned to the figure of Tom Riddle, lounging against the opening of the dormitory. He fingered his wand lazily, and resting on his shoulder was the contented form of Onyx. Dark eyes were fixated on Hadrian, who glared back at him from the bed.

“It’s the way to settle this...like wizards.”

Silas snapped out of his anger, an eagerness twitching in his limbs and wide eyes swivelled back to Hadrian. “I challenge you to a duel.”

Hadrian’s lips pressed into a line. He wanted desperately to say ‘no’, to banish them all from his presence and hide away in his bed. However, a lot of that anger he felt towards Dippet and his current situation had no outlet. Lestrange’s line would merge with the Black’s in the future...and Bellatrix Lestrange would kill her cousin. Sirius…

“I accept. Tonight.”

Lestrange bounced on the bed. “Perfect. I look forward to it, Hadrian.” There was more teeth than smile at the look that was flashed at him.

Dorian clapped a hand on his friend's leg. "Let's give him some space to prepare himself. I warn you, Hadrian, Silas is a fine duellist."

Hadrian simmered at Dorian and Silas exited the dormitory, ignoring Tom Riddle who was still standing there watching. Instead, he looked at Cassius, who had moved to sit up.

The blonde boy shoved a hand through his hair. "Tom, is this such a good idea?"

"You challenge my decision?"

Hadrian snorted lightly, taking note of the way Cassius paled. "I think it was my decision, Riddle."

A thick silence fell between them all before Riddle sighed. "Cassius, make sure he is prepared." With that, he too left.

Cassius chewed his bottom lip, staying cross-legged as Hadrian moved off his bed and went to his trunk. "Hadrian, Silas is good...unpredictable even."

Just like his future daughter-in-law , Hadrian thought. He shrugged his shoulders as he took a towel. "I have fought worse."

Cassius averted his eyes. "I'm sure you have. But, what Silas was saying...there is more to it. You know, the whole blood purity debate. Tom has some really interesting thoughts about it all and you should speak to him. Silas is a lot more...difficult to work with."

Talking with Tom Riddle about blood purity? Did his friends even know that he was a half-blood too? Did they know that he had massacred his family and set the basilisk on the school last year? As kind as Cassius had been, he was still a future Death Easter - that he had to make sure he remembered.

Without another word to the sandy-haired boy, he strode out to the bathroom attached to their dormitory. It was time to show Lestrange what he was capable of.

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As he rose from the bow, his wand was at the ready. Lestrange was

quick, already shooting a muttered hex at him. Hadrian quickly reacted, casting *Protego* to bounce whatever it was away from him before shooting a haphazard *Confringo* back.

The other boy just managed to slide out of the way, the wall behind Lestrange exploding into a pile of rubble. Luckily, it was some disused classroom in the dungeons and far away from the common room.

Silas' dark eyes flashed, bearing his teeth at the close call. He sent a flurry of hexes back, and his eyes widened as Hadrian deflected every single one of them with swift shielding charms. It continued for ten minutes.

Hadrian simply stood in the exact spot, fielding off the spells as if they were just flies. He smirked as Silas' forehead broke out into sweat and he started to bite out his spells louder. A few darker ones started to work their way into his arsenal, black and grey as they warped through the air towards Hadrian's awaiting shield.

"Fucking fight," Lestrange hissed, dark hair in disarray around his shoulders.

He simply shielded the next flurry of curses, enjoying the anger rising in the other Slytherin. And then he saw his break as Silas started to slow.

Langlock - he conjured wordlessly, breaking his shield to throw the spell.

It hit. Lestrange's eyes bulged out as his tongue welded itself to the roof of his mouth. Hadrian's smirk deepened as he stepped closer. "Not so good at the non-verbals, are you?" he goaded. He hit the boy with a *Tarantallegra* , amused as Silas' legs started to dance whilst his fingers clawed at his mouth. The tongue curse was another of the Half Blood Prince's inventions - but this one he knew the counter for, rather than use one again in reckless judgement.

Hadrian muttered the counter-curse, delighting in the loud, gasping breath the other boy drew in. He prefered a bit of fight, and Lestrange needed to be shown that blood status did not mean weakness. As Silas recovered, Hadrian muttered: ' *Expecto Patronum* '.

From his wand, a silvery animal burst out. However, the blood drained from his face as the stag did not appear. No, in its place was something hugely different. The silver dragon outstretched its wings and went straight for Lestrange.

A patronus could not hurt him, but that was not the point here. Silas yelled, “Fuck!” as he tried to shield himself from the ferocious-looking creature.

It was the distraction he wanted. Hadrian threw the horror of his patronus out of the way and disabled Lestrange’s wand with an *Expelliarmus* . The piece of wood clattered to the ground, and the patronus vanished.

Before Hadrian could turn and exit the room, Tom Riddle - who had been watching under a shield with the rest of the Sixth year Slytherin boys - stepped in front of Lestrange, who was panting and flushed.

“Very impressive, Hadrian.”

He did not like how his name was purred, how it seemed to wrap around each of his senses. His chin jutted up as his arms crossed over his chest.

“Let us have a go - I am interested to see how far I can push you.”

Hadrian flicked an eyebrow up, a smile growing on his lips. “Your arrogance astounds me.” For a moment, he had forgotten who he was speaking to, his adrenaline pumping from the duel.

“Then show me what you can do.” Tom Riddle gave a flourish of a bow. He looked up from where he had sarcastically bowed. “Are you not going to show some manners?”

His face drained of colour at the words, the words he had heard in the graveyard as Cedric lay death a few feet away. Hadrian just gave a jerk of his head, a mockery of a bow that he knew would infuriate the other boy. At the twitch in the Slytherin’s face, Hadrian knew it had done just that.

A jet of green light burst from Riddle’s wand, just as a burst of red light exploded from Harry’s. They crashed together in mid-air and suddenly the two colours burned brightly into a shimmering gold. Lestrange went flying back into the broken wall.

“No, no, no,” Hadrian chanted at his stupidity.

Tom’s face was a mask of confusion as he tried to pull his wand away from the thick, pulsing gold thread but it attached the two Slytherins.

His wand vibrated in his hand, causing sweat to break out across his

skin. The golden thread exploded, threads dancing into the air, before cascading down and creating a spider-web of golden light around the two dueling schoolboys. It was history repeating itself. And Hadrian was frozen in fear of what he had done. Voldemort and he had never seen *Priori Incantatem* before in the graveyard. Regardless of what happened now, the Dark Lord would *know* , would know what this is, what the connection was.

His feet were dangling in the air, Riddle also lifting with the force of the spell.

Then it appeared.

A golden bubble in the middle of the connection between them. But cinnamon eyes were fixated on the development as well.

Hadrian had to grit his teeth as he pressed forward, trying to will that bubble forward, towards Riddle. Riddle was not stupid. He pressed forward as well, teeth bared and a sheen of sweat on his forehead.

It was a sheer battle of wills between the two of them. But Hadrian was faltering, his brain firing all sorts of memories he did not want to look back on at that moment. The nodule of magic was heading into his direction. Hadrian released a strained noise, pushing it back a little bit. But this was not the newly-resurrected Voldemort he was fighting against. This was Riddle in his prime.

The bead of light smashed into Hadrian's wand. Emerald eyes gazed in horror as he experienced his magic thrown into the air, revealing the echoes of his recent magic. It wasn't the monstrosity of Voldemort's victims regaining their ghostly forms, but Hadrian knew he was fucked.

Thrown into the air were ghostly figures of Lestrange inflicted by their duelling magic...simple spells like silencing his curtains and school work...then Draco's chest splitting open with the *Sectumsempra* spell, blood staining his wet, white shirt as he collapsed to the ground...the *Langlock* used on Peeves...refilling the bottles that sat at Slughorn's legs as he drunkenly chatted to Hagrid...and small bursts of general spells used in lessons before it happened. The *Crucio* he tried to hit Bellatrix with...and failed...her falling about laughing - the laughing that echoed in the web.

Hadrian drew in a deep breath, his heart trying to break out of his chest, to end his misery. He barely noticed his feet touching the ground, or the golden light disappearing.

“Out!” Riddle shouted.

There was a flurry of movement as the Slytherins who watched - but saw nothing but a golden web around their two classmates, shielding them from view - scurried at the furious Riddle’s words.

Hadrian’s eyes stung, exhausted from the fight physically and mentally. A warm hand gathered in his shirt, pulling the raven-haired boy close. Riddle leaned down so their faces were only centimetres away.

“What the fuck was that, Peverell?” Riddle asked, voice a harsh sibilant whisper.

And Hadrian's world fell apart.

Chapter 9

Chapter Notes

> Got a bit of an arm injury so the next few updates may be 2-3 days apart, but I will do my best!
>
> Hope you enjoy!

“Let me go,” Hadrian choked out.

The curl on Riddle’s forehead dangled between them, damp with sweat. His hand squeezed his shirt tighter, keeping the shorter boy in place. Those cinnamon eyes narrowed on him.

His scar tingled, small sparks shooting down his nerves at the other boy’s proximity. Hadrian tried to struggle out, resorting to hitting Riddle’s arm with a clenched fist and raising his wand with the other.

The future Dark-Lord spun them around, slamming Hadrian’s back against the wall. His head bounced on the stone, pain exploding where it made a connection and his wand tumbled from his fingers. Riddle kicked the piece of wood away. It was his wand, pale yew, that slipped under Hadrian’s chin.

“We have *so* much to discuss,” Riddle purred, though there was a terrifying dark edge to it. “And you are going to start giving me answers.”

“Fuck off, Riddle. I’m not scared of you.”

“Well, maybe you should be.”

Hadrian chuckled, wincing at the pain that sparked in his head and back. He looked at Riddle, and felt a touch across his mind. Without a further thought, Hadrian slammed up his defenses.

“So, an Occlumens…but not a strong one yet…I could rip through that mind of yours and take everything.” His voice lowered as Riddle brought his mouth down to Hadrian’s ear, breath hot. “I could leave you insane, screaming for a sense of identity in St Mungos. But for some strange reason, I want that brain of yours to remain intact.”

Hadrian swallowed noisily, very aware that Riddle's body was pressed against his, pinning him to the wall. The dark, spicy scent invaded his senses and their magic still tinged the air, charging it. What could he do? His arrogance had cost him his secrecy. His Gryffindor side had erupted out, revelling in the need to battle Riddle and look where it had ended up. What exactly had Riddle seen? The figures had been ghostly, more echoes of the spells and outcomes than the people themselves. Nevertheless, his crimes had slapped him in the face and revealed themselves to the other Slytherin boy. He had cast *Crucio* ... *Sectumsempra* ...without a regard for the outcome of using such magic. That, mixed with all the other stupid slip ups.

He jolted as a warm hand came up and took his jaw. Hadrian could not stop the cry from tumbling from his lips as the metal of the ring came in contact with his skin and *burned* . It was not painful, but it seemed to rip through his nerves and set them on fire up to his scar. This had not happened when the ring had made contact with his hand, but he was weakened and the proximity to his scar was clearly having some effect.

"How can I feel connected with you? Why do our wands refuse to battle? Why do you react to my...ring?" Riddle asked, his face dangerously close to Hadrian's. Cinnamon eyes dropped very briefly to the lips in which that cry had escaped from. "I know some of your secrets, Hadrian, but there is still so much I do not understand. And I *hate* not understanding."

Avada kedavra eyes snapped wide open when those fingers wrapped around his jaw moved higher, up to his cheek to cup it. Any words died in his mouth from the *hunger* he saw in the face of the taller Slytherin.

"I want to invite you to a gathering, tomorrow evening. Avery can take you there. I want to see what you think." Lips curled up into a dark smile. "To see whether I should consider you an enemy or...a friend."

He wanted to mock the word 'friend' falling from Riddle's mouth but his brain was struggling to form any response due to the thundering of his heart and his scar's strange pulsing. Suddenly, Riddle let him go, striding out of the room with his robes billowing in a manner that would make Snape proud. Hadrian slumped against the wall, feeling strangely empty. His head throbbed with every thud of his heart.

Staring at the discarded wand on the floor, he recalled the *priori*

incantatem and the memories of magic hidden in its wooden body. But it was a scapegoat. The wand was just an outlet. There was no escaping the rush he had felt after chasing after Bellatrix and casting the Unforgivable, or the tremble of exhilaration in his very core after slicing Draco Malfoy open. Hadrian slid down the stone wall, legs haphazardly stretched out in front of him as he struggled to work through the myriad of conflicting thoughts battling in his head.

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Hadrian chewed on the piece of toast, lost in the growing noise of breakfast in the Great Hall. Sleep had evaded him a lot of the evening, knowing that Riddle was in the bed next to his, and that some of his secrets had been exposed. He felt *raw* and so unsure about everything.

He had been joined by Adelia Greengrass, Druella Lazenby and Sylvia Selwyn soon after he had sat at the near-empty table. Adelia had resumed her fascination with his hair, leaning her head on Hadrian's shoulder as she wrapped a finger with a raven lock.

Onyx had joined him in bed last night, strangely quiet and was asleep once more in his pocket during breakfast.

"What happened last night? Lestrange came back to the common room in a state," Druella asked, drawing a steaming tea up to her lips. Hazel eyes studied him curiously.

Hadrian wanted to shrug but Greengrass had laid claim to his shoulder. "I don't know, ask him," he replied instead.

Sylvia gave a speculative hum, raising her red eyebrows. "Did you see Tom Riddle's face when he entered not long after? It gave me the chills."

"He always gives people the chills," Adelia answered, releasing Hadrian's hair as she leaned over to grab a handful of plump grapes.

"I cannot tell whether they are good chills, bad chills or both," Druella said. "That intensity...what do you reckon it would be like to *be* with him?"

Hadrian grimaced. “Do you have to discuss this?”

“Well, he certainly likes looking at you, but who can blame him.” Druella grinned. “And yes, we do. No female has ever gotten close to Riddle, and although he has that group of boys in our year, I doubt he sees them as equals or as friends. He is so mysterious.”

Onyx poked his head out of his pocket. “ *Massster, have you found female matesss?* ”

Hadrian gave him a pointed look, but it drew the girls’ attention. Adelia gave a delighted gasp as Onyx wriggled out and slithered up to Hadrian’s now-free shoulder.

“Oh, he is *beautiful* ,” Greengrass breathed. “Can I stroke him?”

“Mr Peverell.”

He looked up into blue eyes, into the face of his future-mentor. The face was etched into irritation. “Yes, Professor Dumbledore?”

“Your...pet is causing distress to the younger years and I must insist that you keep it locked away or out of sight.”

Hadrian turned his back on the man, to look down the table at all the younger Slytherins who were watching the exchange, throwing dark looks at the bearded man. He then looked at the Ravenclaw table next door, who were mostly studying and in the midst of early morning debates. “I do not see any young students in distress, Professor. I have also checked the school rules, and all companions smaller than cats are allowed. Snakes are even referenced as being specifically allowed.”

“You cannot control the animal, and therefore I must take this up with Headmaster Dippet.”

Hadrian rubbed his eyes. He did not need or want this, not on the little sleep he was surviving on, and the shit he had got involved with whilst duelling last night. “Go then, speak to the Headteacher. I can assure you that I can control my snake, *Professor* .”

Dumbledore’s mouth twitched, but then his head rose and he was distracted by something else. Hadrian followed his gaze, to see the boys coming in. Riddle led them, his jaw set and anger simmering in his dark eyes as he spotted Dumbledore. He strode over.

“ *Is there a problem, Hadrian* ?”

Hadrian opened his mouth to reply to Riddle, before he snapped his mouth shut. There had been something different in the way the boy had said it that sent warning bells ringing in his head. He averted his eyes, clenching a fist in his lap.

“Professor Dumbledore,” Tom Riddle greeted with mock politeness, “how can we help you?”

However, the aged man was silent, glancing between Riddle and the green-eyed boy who now looked elsewhere. Without saying another word, Dumbledore swept away in a mass of light blue and purple robes.

“I swear, that man’s fashion sense makes me want to tear out my eyeballs,” Adelia murmured. “You poor thing.” Her fingers trailed down Onyx’s shiny scales. The snake did not react at first, simply staring up at Riddle before slithering down into Hadrian’s lap. The Slytherin girl took that as her chance to lean against him again, head stealing the spot where Onyx had been.

Cassius slid into the spot next to Druella and opposite Hadrian, beating Silas. However, Hadrian did not look up from where he was glaring at the almost empty cup of pumpkin juice in front of him. Conversation flowed between all of the Slytherins but Hadrian descended deep into his thoughts. In the memories Dumbledore had shown him of Riddle’s childhood, the little boy had told the Professor that he could speak to snakes. He remembered the haunted look on the Headmaster’s face, the judgement radiating from him. What had made him so different from Riddle? Harry Potter had spoken to snakes, quite publically too in his Second year. Had the contempt Dumbledore openly showed Riddle one of the reasons he was pushed to fall further in darkness? It could not be blamed on that; Riddle had set a basilisk on the school of his own accord.

Half an hour later, Hadrian was moving with the rest of the Slytherins down to the dungeon where they had their Potions lesson. Slughorn avoided all eye contact with him as the Professor explained that they would be brewing *Draught of the Living Death* . The man literally had not changed his syllabus in decades.

Slughorn explained that they would be attempting to brew it to its half-way stage and he emphasised just how difficult this potion would be. His instructions had already been etched onto the blackboard and he had also directed them to the brand new *Advanced Potion-Making* books on their desks.

Hadrian reached down into his school bag, using his wand to change the cover of the Half-Blood Prince's version to match the ones set out on the tables. They were to try and brew the potion individually so Slughorn could see their progress.

He opened up the page he needed, drawing a finger over the spidery scrawls that were tight and cramped. Hadrian threw himself into brewing the potion, ignoring everyone else in the classroom. It was stifling, causing him to shed his robes and roll his sleeves up. He began the first steps with ease, knowing that they had been set the same hour to complete it to a half-brew. The rest of it he paced evenly.

Not long ago - for him - he was sat here with his friends, with Hermione's hair growing larger with the muggy heat and the intense pressure to be able to brew something this advanced. His chest ached at the memory of his best friend. She would be disappointed in his actions, getting involved in a duel with the Slytherins and the way he had reacted to the teachers.

The Sopophorous bean made a cracking sound as he crushed it under the silver blade, instead of cutting it like the original instructions. He made sure the thirteen were added, not the twelve, before stirring it seven times anti-clockwise and then once clockwise.

Before his eyes, there bloomed a delicate lilac shade across the surface of the lightly bubbling potion. He stepped back, bring his eyes up to Slughorn who was hovering nearby.

"Mr Peverell, you believe you have finished?" The Professor ambled over, eyes widening at the shade of the potion. "I have never seen such a perfect potion brewed by a student." He plucked a flower from his pocket, flicking it into the cauldron, where it immediately began to disintegrate. "Merlin's beard," he breathed. "You did not say that you were such an accomplished potioneer." He brought out his wand and cast a stasis spell on the potion. "Perfection!" He looked at the clock on the wall. "Well, time is up for the rest of you!"

Slughorn made his rounds of the classroom. The only one that had gotten close to Hadrian's success was Riddle, but his potion was still a step behind and a darker shade of purple than Hadrian's.

As the class was excused, Hadrian was asked to stay behind. He stood, back rod-straight, in front of the Professor's desk.

"Ah, Mr Peverell, I think we will put the other's

evening's...misunderstanding to the side. You have an incredible talent, but I would expect that of your family." Slughorn gave a smile. "I am having a small gathering of students like you next weekend, a party. Some of my friends at the Ministry will be attending, as well as my wider connections. I would be delighted to have your presence there."

The sense of deja vu was unsettling but he had to shove it to one side. "I would be delighted to be there, Professor," he answered smoothly.

With Dippet's manipulations and words that Hadrian would never return to his time, maybe there were some connections he could forge. The Ministry of Magic Unspeakable who was involved with Time Magic was what he was going to try and aim for first. Working his way into a place of trust was a priority now he could not trust Dippet. If Dippet was not going to help, then he would take a leaf out of Hermione's book and do it all by himself.

"Excellent!" Slughorn clapped his hands together. "Well, off you go, I will send you your invitation." He slid a note across the table. "By now you will be late for your next lesson, so just give this to your Professor."

"Thank you, Sir." Hadrian pocketed the note and left. Luckily, he just had Divination next, and that Professor was only slightly less barmy than Trelawny had been. It was plenty of time to prepare himself mentally for the 'gathering' Riddle was holding later.

Chapter 10

Chapter Notes

Took a bit longer - stupid arm injury!

Enjoy the delights this chapter offers...

Important note: I really do not like the inconsistencies around the whole Fantastic Beasts franchise. I am picking parts I want to use that fits with the canon, but I refused to watch past the first one. I could rant about it for ages, but I won't. I am sticking to the main Harry Potter stories and using my best judgments.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Both Slytherins walked silently down the dungeon corridor, their shoes slapping against the stone floor the only sound. It seemed to be leading to the same area the duel had occurred the night before. Over dinner, he had received a letter from Dippet asking to resume their lessons, but Hadrian had ripped it up. There was no way he wanted to see the Headmaster at this point.

Cassius cleared his throat. Hadrian frowned when he realised the other boy had stopped, also stopping and turning. The blonde's cheeks were slightly flushed and his hands were buried in his pockets.

"Cassius?"

"A new place has opened up in Hogsmeade, somewhere to eat and drink." His eyes avoided Hadrian's at all cost. "I was just wondering...if you want to, you know, have a drink together?"

"Yeah, sure," Hadrian answered. Cassius had made him feel safe and welcomed in his new House. It was getting more difficult to differentiate between the Avery that he remembered Voldemort mentioning in his joint dreams before the battle at the Department of Ministry, to this Avery. They were not the same person, but probably father and son. What would happen to Cassius Avery in the future?

"That is great." Cassius smiled, walking forward to fall in step with Hadrian as they resumed their walk. "Hogsmeade is alright, a little basic but quite quaint in its own way. All Sixth and Seventh years can go at the weekend." He paused. "Where did you learn to cast a Patronus?"

“When I was about thirteen, I had a few run-ins with some Dementors, so my…uh, tutor taught me it.” Hadrian could not help but shudder a little at the memories of the creatures chasing after Dudley and him, and how they had invaded the Quidditch pitch.

“ *Thirteen* ?”

He shrugged. “Anyone can learn. I taught a group of friends last year.”

“Could you teach me?”

Hadrian smiled at the other Slytherin’s thinly veiled excitement. “Sure, but you will have to be prepared with a happy memory.” They turned a corner down the corridor and then Avery stopped by a large wooden door.

“I think I have one,” Avery murmured, his eyes lingering on Hadrian’s. He gave a quick smile before opening the door, leaving Hadrian wondering what made the other boy look at him like that.

Following inside, he closed the door behind him. It was another abandoned classroom, this one smaller than the one used last night. Lestrange, Dolohov, Mulciber, Nott, Malfoy and a couple of other older Slytherin boys stood in a circle, all dressed in plain black robes. Silas gave him a strange look as they made eye contact, dark eyes gleaming with excitement.

“Tom wants you to sit and watch,” Cassius said, leading Hadrian over to a desk that was pushed to the side of the room. There were no other pieces of furniture in the room so Hadrian wiped the dust away and shimmied onto the top. Avery’s hand came down on his knee, gently squeezing. “Keep an open mind.”

Hadrian could still feel the other boy’s hand imprinted on his knee, as Cassius turned and joined the circle. There was a tightness in his stomach as he sat on the solid wood as he saw the black-robed students gathered like their future children would be in the graveyard after Voldemort’s resurrection. But now, what would change?

His back straightened as Riddle strode in. He felt the boy and his magic before the door had opened. Cinnamon eyes flickered to him before the door slammed shut and he resumed his observations of the circle.

All lowered their heads as if bowing to him.

Hadrian arched an eyebrow. If future Dumbledore could see this now - Tom Riddle and his young budding Death Eaters all gathered together under his nose. How did the boys even start to worship Riddle like this? He was a half-blood. And for some reason, tonight, he had been given a front seat to watch it - whatever 'it' was - unfold.

"My Slytherins, thank you for gathering here this evening. It is not our usual place but tonight we have a visitor," Riddle said, voice deep and dark. "We, as Knights of Walpurgis, lead the protection of the wizarding community against the Muggles. It is our duty to secure the wall between our worlds. They are the enemy."

Hadrian tilted his head to the side. *Knights of Walpurgis* ? A very glorified name for a bunch of students in a school.

"Unfortunately, due to Muggle-sympathisers like Dumbledore, the amount of Muggleborns are increasing, therefore the wall between our worlds are falling apart. Grindelwald is rising in power, and we have offered our services for when he needs them. However, as many of you have reported, Grindelwald is becoming more...unhinged and we have to be ready to step forward when the time comes. His agenda has increasingly moved away from ours. If he falls, we must continue the work...but make it our own."

It was a mistake on his behalf. Harry Potter had been introduced to the Wizarding World at eleven years old, and took everything for granted. Naively, he stumbled through and relied on the knowledge of Ron who had been brought up in the magical world, and Hermione who fully emerged herself in all knowledge. He knew about the Muggle World Wars, based on some of the programmes his Uncle watched and a unit in Year 5 and 6 about the War. Then there was the war against Voldemort, but anything else...nothing. He knew who Grindelwald was up to a point but everyone was so obsessed with Voldemort's regime, that the other man was forgotten. Tom Riddle would be proud of that fact. Binns would go on and on about the bloody Goblin wars, but never the Wizarding ones.

Riddle strode into the front of the classroom, opposite Hadrian. The group moved out of the circle to stand facing the other Slytherin. He looked utterly in his element, chin up, wand twirling in his long, elegant fingers as he gazed upon his fellow schoolmates. From here, Hadrian could not see their faces, only Riddle's.

"Lestrange, debrief us please."

There was a clearing of a throat near the front. “My father remains in contact with Grindelwald, although sporadically. He is still after the *International Statute of Secrecy* being lifted, although seems more focused on the Hallows at this point.”

Hadrian filed all of this under his mental bank. What were the ‘Hallows’?

Lestrange continued, “I have asked my father about Hadrian Peverell and Grindelwald’s hunting of him. My father was under the assumption that the Peverell’s are dead, but they have huge links to the Hallows. It makes sense they went into hiding, but Grindelwald is very secretive about his quest of the fictional items. My father has been more focused on the Ministry.”

Back stiffening, his senses zoomed in. So, his name had relevance? Was that why Dippet had chosen it for him? The Peverell’s were linked to some kind of thing called ‘Hallows’ and it fed into the narrative of the time they were in?

Riddle’s eyes once more floated over to him before he called on the next boy to ‘de-brief’ - Abraxas.

“The Ministry is trying to handle both the impact of the Muggle war and the Wizarding one. My father and the Minister are currently working on International relations, a lot of joining forces with the French Ministry.” Abraxas paused. “Apparently, there are some links between Grindelwald and Dumbledore. Grindelwald is obsessive over the man. Furthermore, my father has told me that the Minister is now in talks with the Muggle Prime Minister. All of this goes against our mission of secrecy.”

He had to give it to them. This group of boys saw the importance of keeping themselves secret from the Muggles, against the apparent ideology of Grindelwald wanting to tear it down. Hadrian shifted, remembering how cowed the Dursleys were when Dumbledore came to pick him up at the beginning of the year. Their eyes were wide and frightened as they saw the acts of magic performed by the old man. Dumbledore had been grave when he had acknowledged that the Dursleys had neglected him, and had suffered cruelty at their hands. If Dumbledore had known that, why had that not been challenged before that moment? He claimed that he had evoked protection on Privet Drive, but how many other ways could he have been protected?

Hadrian had fallen into his thoughts and missed a couple of other boys giving their briefings of their family ties,

Riddle was now commanding them into a circle. “Hadrian, will you join us?”

“With what?” he asked.

A slow smile crept onto the handsome face. “Sharing our magic.”

Later, he would ask what made him do it, but he slid off the desk and his feet carried him over to the space that Riddle had left beside him and Abraxas. Hadrian rolled his shoulders and when he looked at all the boys in the circle, he realised that it was Riddle and himself who were not dressed in the standard black robes.

“It is All Hallows Eve tomorrow.”

Hadrian froze.

“And we offer our magic, as the dead become closest to the veil.” Riddle’s hands reached out, as did everyone else’s. Abraxas and Riddle both took Hadrian’s hands.

Suddenly, there was a pulse in his magic, a tingling in his scar. Hadrian drew in a shaky breath, regret crashing into him. All the boys started to chant, their voices low and echoing in the confines of the small classroom. Hadrian felt his eyes drift closed as the sound seemed to reverberate deep into his bones and his magic started to unravel.

Cords of his core stretched out. The feeling of Riddle and Abraxas’ warm hands in his own disappeared as he felt his physical senses start to vanish. It was as if he was floating in a void, rich with the in-sync baritone chants of the Slytherins and deep in the growing magic.

The voices were drifting slowly away, becoming fainter as the magic surged. Hadrian could not see what was his, and what was everyone else’s. It was intense, maybe close to *too* intense. Each strand of magic that passed through him had a different feeling - one ice cold, one warm but invigorating...and a couple of dark suffocating ones, each with their own feel.

Hadrian felt when Riddle’s magic met his. He could not breathe. His magic grasped at the throbbing, dark tendrils that latched onto his in response - joining them together. If he could feel his physical body, he would have let out a sob at the feeling. It was as if he came *home* .

With a strangled cry, Hadrian wrenched himself free with everything he could. His eyes flew open, seeing that the boys all had their eyes closed, their chantings mere whispers falling from barely moving lips. Emerald eyes flitted to Riddle.

He was looking back. And with growing horror, Hadrian still felt Riddle's magic tangled with his.

It was difficult to even see those cinnamon eyes, with the pupils blown that wide.

Hadrian could not move, the magic still coursing through their joint hands. For some reason, Riddle was the one who let go, his eyes not leaving Hadrian's. Everyone else also released their hands.

Without waiting, Hadrian turned his back on the group and made his way to the door. His hand was trembling as he reached out for the handle. His senses were wired, body jittery. He left, left the silence of the room and made his way back to the dormitory where he threw himself into bed and willed himself to relax.

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Walking down the circular corridor, he was aware of the dripping sound to the sides. The viridian-coloured marble was shiny both underfoot and around, with a floating orb hovering in the air leading the way. Snakes weaved around stone pillars.

Hadrian stepped into a vast chamber, one he knew very well. The dominating statue of Salazar Slytherin stood, his beard long and thin. At the base of the statue, stood a tall black-haired boy. It was a serious case of deja vu.

Everything was slightly fogged around the edges, screaming to Hadrian that it was just a dream. But everything about Tom Riddle was solid and clear.

The Slytherin turned, and a dark eyebrow rose. "Hadrian Peverell, you start to even invade my dreams now?"

Hadrian frowned. "This is not real."

"Of course it is not real," Riddle mocked. "This is just a dream." He folded

his arms across his chest, studying the other boy. "The reason you are here, is because my consciousness is trying to figure you out." He approached, arms unfolding again as he circled Hadrian. "There is something about you which is familiar...and yet I can tell you we have never met."

Hadrian did not know what to do. This was clearly a dream, and his dream-Riddle was very active. Not liking the boy behind him, he turned, realising that Riddle had gotten closer so they were a metre apart.

"Who are you?"

"Well, that is a difficult question to answer," he replied. It was just a dream. What could he answer? Harry Potter or Hadrian Peverell? His identity was no longer the same. It was almost as if Harry Potter was a different boy a lot of the time.

"Peverell. Are you a cousin? The Peverell's lines are vast, pretty connected to everyone." Riddle moved even closer. "Are you a spy? Perhaps Dumbledore put you here...and your animosity with him is a ruse."

Hadrian rolled his eyes. Dream-Riddle was just as annoying as in real life. He turned his back and walked away, towards the statue of Salazar Slytherin. Ginny had once laid at his feet, her soul being pulled out by a memory of Riddle. A horcrux. He placed a hand to the stone but felt nothing, just like a dream. He drew comfort in that.

"But that cannot be it. Your magic is...dark and light, such a heady combination. Dumbledore is pure light, he would not allow a spy like you to infiltrate."

Groaning, Hadrian tensed. "This is such a nightmare. Can you just shut up and stop rambling on?"

"Just as mouthy in my dreams."

"This is my *dream Riddle. " Hadrian sat down at the base of Slytherin's feet and closed his eyes.*

" What are you doing ?" came the incredulous response.

"Trying to go to another dream where you are not here."

It was Riddle's turn to roll his eyes. He leant down, grabbed Hadrian's shirt and pulled him up to standing position, despite the protests. Those cinnamon eyes studied him intently. "You think this is your dream?" Not waiting for a response, Tom's other hand came up and his fingers brushed

Hadrian's scar.

Hadrian flushed as his mouth released a whimper as a strange feeling zapped through him. His magic core unfurled and he noticed something different. That mass that had connected to his in the classroom - Riddle's magic - was still there. Emerald eyes were wide as he stared up into Riddle's eyes who was equally searching his.

"Where are we, Hadrian?"

"A dream?"

The smile was almost all teeth, his face leaning in so his warm breath brushed against Hadrian's lips. "And where is this location?"

Hadrian was silent.

The hand in his shirt tightened. "If this is your dream, why do you dream of this place…a place you have not been before? And if you are in my dream, why have you not questioned where this is?" Riddle smirked. "I saw your mind…I saw a vision of a flaming-haired girl laying at the base of Salazar Slytherin's feet, in the Chamber of Secrets. You know this place, outside of our dream."

"Our dream?" Hadrian uttered, mind buzzing. He tried to wriggle free but the hand held him still.

"I told you that I do not want to rip that mind out of that pretty skull of yours. I must admit, I have been close to doing so. I hate secrets. I hate anything I cannot understand. Your magic is your saving grace, Hadrian. You are powerful…different. I want you on my side."

"I will never be on your side, Riddle."

"How did you like the ritual?"

Hadrian wrenched himself free. "This is just a dream." His breath struggled to escape his throat, which had gotten stuck in his throat. Everything started to fall apart around him as Hadrian slipped back into consciousness.

Chapter End Notes

So…I am excited to hear what you think!

Chapter 11

Chapter Notes

I really hope you enjoy this chapter - I loved writing it!

Thank you for all your lovely comments - I will try and reply (I have been super busy on top of writing this!)

A sharp chill travelled on the All Hallows Eve air, seeking out skin that was exposed and giving it an unpleasant pinch. The leaves on the ground were thick and heavy, swaddled with a layer of moisture left from the overnight precipitation. All of the travelling Hogwarts students were bundled up in layers to protect them from Scotland's autumnal turn as they ventured down to the small town.

Hadrian was chewing his bottom lip. He had to ask Cassius to meet him in Hogsmeade, due to Slughorn wanting to see him - cornering him on his way out. The Professor had a letter from Dippet, which was still in his pocket unopened, but also a charmed galleon that the Headmaster wanted him to use to fund his weekend trips. Slughorn had relayed that Dippet had told Hadrian to relax, to also get any other clothing/school supplies he needed. Hadrian did not ask any questions, taking the offered items. It was not as if he could just reach into his Potter vault.

He had almost cancelled on Cassius this morning. The weird dream last night had made him feel on edge. There had been no sign of Riddle in the morning or at breakfast. Sharing a mindspace with Voldemort was not unusual to him, but the odd dream where Riddle was seemingly aware of him had been...different. Hadrian did not know whether the dream had been connected or not. Riddle's pushing of the point regarding the location they had been in, was an issue if it was some messed up connection.

Hadrian strode into Hogsmeade and stopped. It was almost exactly the same and it made his heart pump. The Three Broomsticks' sign swayed in the wind, carved pumpkins floating outside for the Halloween celebrations. He smiled at the memories. His memories. This town's future. Zonko's and Honeydukes stood there as if time really had not affected any of this.

Taking in a deep breath that filled his lungs with the frigid air, he began to walk to the new place Cassius had mapped out. He had said

that it was down the left fork in the main street, the fifth shop along. Gladrags caught his eye, and he made a mental note to see what other clothing items there were and Tomes and Scrolls was on his list of places to visit, especially now he had potential funds.

Hadrian grimaced as he turned at the fork and saw the cafe that Cassius was meeting him in. Madam Puddifoot's. Cho's choice of venue, with all pink frilly bows and everything. He just hoped Cassius realised his mistake and they would just go to the Three Broomsticks.

He opened the door, eyebrows raising at the seasonal decor. It was dark, with candles floating everywhere inside intricately carved pumpkins. There was a harp floating in the corner, strings plucked by imaginary fingers. There were intimate tables, but it was too dark to make anyone out.

What an odd place for Cassius to pick.

"Who are you here to see, dear?" a woman asked, suddenly appearing at the door. Her robes were pitch-black with silvery spiderwebs embroidered into two panels either side of her stout hips. Bright red lips curved into a smile, brown eyes twinkling.

"Uh, Cassius Avery?"

"Oh yes, that lovely young man." She clapped her hands together, but with little sound. "Come, follow me."

Hadrian was led down the side of the cafe, surprised he could not hear the conversations of the other customers. He was led to the corner, which was slightly more secluded. Cassius sat at the small table, his leg bouncing underneath it from where it was visible under the celestial tablecloth.

Cassius stood, brushed down his robes, a smile on his handsome face. "Hadrian."

"Cassius." He returned the warm smile as he sat down.

The woman had disappeared,

Cassius sat down. There was a pink flush on his cheeks and his fingers played with the spoon that rested on the saucer that his tea sat upon. Above them, a collection of three different sized pumpkins cast a glowing light upon them.

“What did Professor Slughorn want?”

Hadrian sighed. “Just to make sure I had everything for Hogsmeade.”

“Well, this is my treat.” Cassius pushed a menu towards him. “I have not ordered the cake yet, but I hope you did not mind that I ordered some tea for us.” He picked up the teapot and poured it into the cup in front of Hadrian.

He looked over to the other patrons, to be further surprised he could not quite make them out in the dim lighting. “Thank you.” He paused. “It is very quiet.”

“Madam Puddifoot told me it was to keep the mystery of All Hallows Eve, but it is quite nice. I will ask her what charm she is using. Good for keeping eavesdroppers out.” Cassius cleared his throat. “So, what shall we go for?”

Hadrian allowed his eyes to wander over the sweet choices, a selection of fruit-based and chocolate. His stomach was twisted, with the strange and intimate lunch he was having with his roommate.

Cassius gave a small, husky laugh. “If you are struggling, I quite like the idea of the *Little Tastes of Gluttony* - a selection of everything. I have a bit of a sweet tooth.”

Hadrian pushed the menu back. “That’s fine.” He took his dainty cup and sipped the tea. It was milky, no sugar and immediately warmed his bones, allowing his body to chase away the last lingering touches of the autumn air.

Cassius pressed the tip of his wand to the elegant writing of their choice of dish, before placing the parchment back into the silver holder. “This is an interesting place.”

Hadrian hummed. “Yes.”

“How are you settling in at Hogwarts?”

Terrible. “It’s fine. It’s a lot to get used to.” Hadrian shifted in the chair, watching as the candlelight caused shadows to dance on Cassius’ face.

“It is a lot to get used to,” the other boy agreed. “But I think you have been good for us.”

Hadrian frowned. “What do you mean?”

“Sometimes, some of us can feel like we are all powerful, and get lost in that false sense of grandeur. Being involved with Tom can make you feel like that. We all know he is an amazingly powerful wizard but you could match him. Sometimes, when you lead a revolution, just one powerful force is not enough. But with you on our side as well, we have a better chance of succeeding. A lot of us feel that way.”

He grimaced. “I don’t even know what your ‘revolution’ is.”

Cassius leaned back in his chair. “We want the barriers between our world and the Muggles to strengthen. You know what happened last time they found out about us, the hunting and killing.” He sipped his tea. “They are a danger, look at what they have done with their weapons and ideology in Germany.”

“Well, what about Muggleborns or Half-bloods?”

Cassius stared at him for a long moment. “Muggleborns come into our society and have no idea of the practices of our culture. So many of our rituals and celebrations have been broken down over time. The ritual we did the other night, the power sharing, is forbidden...seen as Dark magic. So many branches of magic are forbidden now. You challenged that with Dumbledore.” Another pause. “Half bloods are more complicated...maybe a necessity to ensure inbreeding isn’t rife.”

The platter of cakes suddenly appeared between them, all dusted with silvery shimmer and a range of pink-red asters lay along one side of the wooden board.

“Tell me more about you.”

Hadrian watched as Cassius took a lemony square of cake and bit into it. “What do you want to know?”

Cassius smiled. “I want to know who Hadrian Peverell is.”

He picked up a chocolate square and bit into the soft sponge. There was a shot of soft white chocolate in the middle that melted into his taste buds. What could he say?

He had not realised he had been silent for so long, until Cassius chuckled. “Alright, let’s start with Quidditch...Abraxas claims you play?”

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It had been hours they had ended up drinking tea and eating their way through the multitude of small cake bites. They had debated Quidditch and Cassius had not believed him when Hadrian had told him about his riskiest move, similar to the Wronski Feint, and had challenged him to a game. Then they had gotten onto Hadrian's background of Defense, talking about the Patronus and Dementors.

Hadrian had suddenly become aware of the time, expressing his need to go to the book shop, which is why they had quickly made a stop before it shut. He had picked up a couple of books after having a delicate, private conversation with the owner. One was a children's book *The Tales of Beedle the Bard* , which apparently was the best way to begin to learn about the Hallows. The other was a history of ritual magic, which the owner was very reluctant to give him. He had pocketed the books after purchasing, whilst Cassius had been flicking through a book on snakes.

"I hope you had a nice day," Cassius commented, as they strolled back to the castle for the Feast. It was already almost dark, the nights drawing in much earlier.

"I did. Thank you Cassius," Hadrian replied, offering the Slytherin a smile. He rubbed his cold hands together and drew his cloak a little higher. The temperature had plummeted, wind a little sharper than before.

"Here." A gloved hand took Hadrian's arm, stopping them both on the empty road down to Hogwarts. Cassius removed his thick, green knitted scarf and draped it over Hadrian's shoulders, before securing it around his neck. "It looks much better on you."

Hadrian stared into cool blue eyes, heart beating at the other boy's very close proximity and the intense look Cassius was giving him. The scarf still held the warmth from the Slytherin. "Thank you." He flushed at how tight his voice was.

Cassius did not move away. Instead, his hand reached up, fingertips skimming Hadrian's cheek. "I will use *this* memory for when you teach me my Patronus." His lips quirked up before he turned and started to walk back.

Hadrian blinked rapidly. What had just happened? He shoved his hands in his pockets and hurried to join Cassius. Luckily, Cassius began to talk about Onyx, and the care he would need growing up - all which he had picked up in the book he had flicked through.

They entered the Great Hall, to see it in a ghostly blue glow - a myriad of floating pumpkins and fire streaking through the enchanted night sky. The Bloody Baron was looking bored as The Fat Friar spoke to him, animatedly waving his hands in the air.

“You did not attend your lessons,” were the first word Abraxas said to him as they seated themselves with the Slytherins.

“Oh leave off it, Abraxas,” Cassius grumbled. “I took Hadrian to Hogsmeade to show him around. He has ages to catch up.”

An elegant white-blonde eyebrow rose. “And he has ages to visit Hogsmeade.”

Before Cassius could respond, Hadrian made his move. “I apologise, Abraxas; I forgot entirely that you guys usually spend the weekend in the library. After everything, I just needed to get out.”

Cool blue eyes studied him before his face softened a little. “Well, I did manage to do some extra of my own studies, but this will mean you can teach yourself the next unit of Ancient Runes.”

Hadrian grimaced. Having never picked Ancient Runes, Abraxas was taking him through the very basics. There were no elective subjects. Students studied everything. Everything apart from Muggle Studies. The very thought of Tom Riddle sitting in Muggle Studies was hilarious. He poured himself a glass of pumpkin juice and gave Cassius the jug, who had slid in next to him. Hadrian took off his outside cloak and folded the scarf up.

He kept it in his lap, unsure why he felt so embarrassed to give it back in front of everyone. The material was thick, warm and soft to the touch. It held Cassius’ slightly citrus smell. He helped himself to some of the food and allowed his gaze to wander to the other tables. It was a sea of mostly unknown faces, all in their own worlds.

A hissing caught his attention as Onyx slithered up his leg. The snake had insisted on staying behind to hunt. “ *Massster, I found a big friend* ,” Onyx hissed excitedly, eyes wide and tail flicking.

Hadrian glowered at the beast, knowing that he could not respond to

him. Onyx however, was caught in his own little world. At least Riddle wasn't around.

"*I wonder if I will get asss big asss ssshe is? Ssshe mussst be very lonely. I think I will visssit her again tomorrow.*"

He listened with growing horror, aware everyone was starting to watch the snake hiss and wriggle at him. The basilisk? Did Onyx find it? He knew that Riddle set it upon the castle last year, and had overheard hushed conversations of Myrtle Warren - Moaning Myrtle.

Instead of shutting up, Onyx continued talked to him without a care in the world. "*Ssshe is very beautiful. Ssshe sssaysss that ssshe hasss a Massster too. I think it isss the other Ssspeaker. Why do you not ssspeak to him? He isss very kind."*

Hadrian had to take a steady breath in to try and calm his thundering heart. He gathered his robes in his hands and his scarf. "I forgot I need to grab a book from the library." He moved out of the seat, reaching out for Onyx to slither up to his arm. Ignoring the Slytherin's odd looks, Hadrian rushed out.

Striding through the corridors, he was glad there was no one about as everyone was at the feast. "*Onyx, I have told you to not ssspeak to me when othersss are around.*"

Onyx slithered down his arm, leg and onto the stone floor, sliding along next to him. Hadrian grimaced at the sight they must make. Ron would have had a bloody heart attack.

"*I know Massster, but thisss female was ssso large and majessstic. I told her all about you.*"

Hadrian stopped. "*What?*"

Onyx kept slithering along. "*We are ssso lucky to have Ssspeakers. Ssshe told me it was a very rare gift.*"

Groaning, he pulled a hand down his face. " *It is a sssecret* ." He fell back into stride with the fast, black snake.

"*Why*?"

"*Becaussse people think that wizardsss who ssspeak to sssnakes are usually very bad people.*" He paused, quirking an eyebrow up. "*Because I think they all have been.*"

"*Doesss that make you a bad perssson, Masster?*"

"*I am not perfect, Onyx but I do not classs myssself asss bad.*" They came to the dungeon entrance and Hadrian scooped up his companion so they could descend the stairs. "*It isss jussst that I do not want people to judge me. That big sssnake'sss Massster isss a very bad perssson and I want you to try and keep away from him.*"

"*But he ssstrokesss me and givesss me tasssty treatsss*," grumbled the little beast.

"*I will ssstroke you and give you niccce treatsss*."

"*Promissse*?"

"*Yesss*."

They entered the Slytherin common room and Hadrian sat down in front of the crackling fire, facing the rest of the room so he would not be disturbed. His appetite had been lost with Onyx's public ramblings but it was quite nice to have some time to himself.

Hadrian removed *The Tales of Beedle the Bard* and began to read, losing himself in the stories next to the warming heat of the fireplace. He had finished *The Wizard and the Hopping Pot* , some very whimsical tale of Muggles and Wizards living in some kind of harmony, when the fire suddenly distinguished.

Emerald eyes shot up, but every candle was smothered in an instant, plunging the common room in darkness tinged with that eerie green light.

The temperature plummeted. Onyx was fast asleep still by the now-dead fire. Hadrian closed his book, wincing at the sharp sound it made. "Hello?"

It was *freezing* , colder than how the dementors made him feel.

Someone was here. No...something was here. There was a flicker of movement in his peripheral vision, and yet it vanished when he tried to seek it out in the darkness. His hand moved down to his pocket, where his wand was.

"No need, wizard. Your magic can do nothing to me."

Hadrian's jaw tensed. The voice was like grinding bones, raspy and

raw. It made something deep within him convulse with dread. Not the fear a person felt towards the green light of the Killing Curse, something much deeper than that, something primordial even.

“Who are you?”

The laugh was like shards of glass. “The veil between our worlds is so tenuous this evening…the magic from your little ritual so…vibrant. I wanted to send you all a guest, your friends. They will receive beloved family members, some…more unwanted guests. But you.”

Hadrian swallowed noisily. What was the time? Surely people would be coming back now from the feast?

There was a flicker of movement once more. Hadrian did not want to stand, did not want to allow this *thing* to come at him from behind.

“You are as much a stranger to this world as I am. You do not belong.” The voice grew closer. “Your beloved have not died yet…or come of existence. I feel you have cheated me. Touched by my cold hands.” Something brushed against his scar, causing Hadrian’s stomach to lurch and his skin to break out in cold sweat. “Yet, I do not remember. A survivor of my grasp.”

Hadrian sucked in a breath. “I have no business with you.”

That horrifying sound came again, a mockery of a laugh. “My curiosity is piqued, young wizard. This is no threat…yet. I will watch. For now.”

The fire exploded in the hearth, candles around the common room firing up as if nothing was amiss. Hadrian sat there. He blinked and tried to stop the nausea bubbling in his gut. Well, if he wasn’t fucked already, he guessed he was now.

Chapter 12

Chapter Notes

> So...this took a little longer as it is my longest chapter. I hope you enjoy!
>
> I love seeing your comments :) and thank you all for them! You are amazing!

The first week of November passed quickly. Snow had settled early on in the week, smothering the castle and its grounds in its cold embrace. The Sixth and Seventh year mock exams were starting next week, and the library had been packed with students cramming information. Hadrian had kept his head down, studying with the Slytherin boys. Even Lestrange had offered him some help with some Transfiguration work. Riddle had hardly been around and when he asked where he was, Hadrian only received shrugs or silence.

It was bizarre how no one spoke about the duel or what had transpired. Hadrian had no idea what any of them thought about it. It was almost as if they had been silenced. He just knew Riddle had something to do with it. Then again, since then everything had taken an abrupt turn for the worst, with the bizarre dream and the horrifying visitor.

However, a few of the Slytherin boys had mentioned Halloween evening, of being visited by a relative or so very briefly due to the ritual. When they had asked Hadrian if he had seen his mother, he had shook his head and lied that he had seen nothing. In fact, the reality was very much one he wanted to avoid talking about. Part of him still thought that he had dozed off and dreamt it all, but the feeling of *something* brushing against his skin that had no real substance clung to his memories.

Now, he sat on a Friday afternoon, before dinner, with Slughorn. The man's curly brown hair was a mass on top of his head as he poured himself a healthy glass of amber liquid.

"I would offer you one, Mr Peverell, but you still have a couple of years." Slughorn gave him a dithering smile before he gestured to the water on his desk. "But help yourself to a glass of that."

Hadrian sat still. When was his birthday now anyway? If he waited

until the 31st of July, he would be over seventeen years old. If he disappeared in the middle of May… December. Sticking with the 31st would be a good hook into reality for him. December the 31st was his new birthday.

“Now, as standard practice, we will briefly go over how you have settled in. It also coincides with looking at your future employment. At this point in the year, we need to make sure you are looking to your future.” Slughorn sat down as he sipped his whisky. “So, Mr Peverell, how are you finding Hogwarts?”

“Fine.”

The smile strained a little at the sides. “Well, you have an excellent knowledge of Potions. What other subjects have you found to your liking here?”

Hadrian poured himself a glass of water. “I like Defense against the Dark Arts and although I have not studied Ancient Runes before, I have found myself doing more reading into them in my spare time.”

“Alright, alright. And your Professors? Are they helping you settle in for your mock examinations?”

“Yes, it is a lot of work but Abraxas is helping me catch up. He would be a great teacher.” A smile touched Hadrian’s lips at the thought of a Malfoy being a teacher.

“Any concerns you have about your schooling so far?”

“No, Sir.”

“I do not suppose you have any relatives left, Mr Peverell? Your name is legendary in it’s own right, and I have not had the…privilege of meeting any of them. Perhaps we could invite them this weekend to the party.”

Typical Slughorn. “No, my mother was the last. I would rather not discuss this, Sir.”

“Ah yes, sorry Hadrian, my apologies.” Slughorn took a hasty gulp of his drink, emitting a small cough from the sudden burn. “Let us move on to nicer things. Now, such an independent young man like you must have some idea of what you are going to get up to after Hogwarts?”

Hadrian grimaced at the expectant look on the Professor's face. "No Sir, my mother taught me how to fight Grindelwald's followers. That was our priority." Just substituting his experience with 'Dumbledore' with his fictional 'mother' was simple enough. Nowadays, the lies just tumbled from his mouth without a second thought.

A ruddy flush was already a semi-permanent feature (probably down to the man's excessive drinking) on the man's face, but it darkened a little. "Well, you have lots of avenues open to you," Slughorn blustered, rummaging in his drawer and pulling out a very thick piece of rigid parchment. "If you look at this, it will flick through the available avenues for a graduate of Hogwarts to take. If one looks interesting, just press your wand to it and it will give you a brief overview."

Hadrian felt his eyebrow rise as he took the document. Where had all of this gone at Hogwarts? Career meetings, welfare checks? Why?

"Now, my boy, I hope you don't mind me catching up on the news whilst you read? If you need my assistance, just ask." Before Hadrian could reply, Slughorn had already gotten out *The Daily Prophet*, licking his thumb to turn the page.

Without further thought, Hadrian looked down at the parchment, which slowly revealed a large moving illustration of a job - with a title emblazoned on the top. The first one was of an Auror - the illustration of a wizard in formal robes apprehending a black-cloaked figure with a spell. It was always the choice that everyone expected of him. He spent his entire time at Hogwarts preparing to fight the Dark Lord - one even Dumbledore could not seem to beat. Pressing his wand to the paper, it announced in writing that it was only for 'the best' and had to share the vision to rid the world of Dark magic. It listed the gradings and subjects but Hadrian found himself underwhelmed. A whole life of fighting? Aunt Petunia used to watch *Dempsy and Makepeace* and *The Professionals* religiously. It seemed like a lot of bother. And maybe Hadrian did not want to spend his entire life hunting down who the Ministry deemed to be 'corrupt'.

Hadrian pressed his wand to the parchment and it started to flick through: Professor; Sportsperson, namedly Quidditch; other Ministry departments, including International branches; Healer; Curse-breaker; Journalist...and a few more general ones like shopkeepers. The only other one that he looked into was Wandmaking, but Hadrian did not think he would enjoy the monotony of the job. Plus Ollivander was excellent anyway.

“Professor?”

Slughorn jumped a little, pulling down his paper. “Yes, Mr Peverell?”

He placed the parchment on the desk. “I do not mean to be rude, Professor. But is this it?”

“Whatever do you mean?”

Hadrian frowned. “Well, there is not much outside of the Ministry.”

Slughorn placed down the paper, his hands joining together. “Our Ministry is arguably the finest in the world.”

“It really is not for me.”

The other man looked taken aback. “Well, there are other niche professions, such as Potioneering or independent research.”

“Why are there so little options?”

Slughorn gave a fatherly smile. “Have you seen how small our year groups are, Mr Peverell? It is not just the war that has affected us. Small gene pools, you see?”

Hadrian frowned. “Who decides on the laws?”

“The Wizengamot. They are an assembly of wizards who hold court and final judgement upon laws and prisoners, led by the Chief Warlock.”

Oh now he remembered. He remembered sitting in the dock in front of the whole Wizengamot over his trial about his ‘misuse’ of magic for what happened with the dementors. A room full of adults attacking a young teenager.

“How are they chosen?”

“The Wizengamot? Well, the Chief Warlock chooses their parliament.”

“So, they are not elected by the public?”

Slughorn chuckled, eyes twinkling. “It looks like we have a budding politician.” He looked to the large clock on the wall. “Sadly, Mr Peverell, it is time for dinner. Perhaps we should continue this conversation next week?”

Hadrian nodded. “I would like that, Sir.” When he left, he made a beeline for the Great Hall.

Abraxas was already sitting there with Dolohov and Nott, helping himself to some of the chicken. His blue eyes widened at the serious expression on Hadrian’s face. Even Riddle was present today, but he was in discussions with the two older Slytherin boys - Orion Black and Gregory Pucey.

“I will catch up with the work by myself, Abraxas. I am really grateful so far. But I have another favour to ask.” Hadrian sat down. “I want you to teach me everything about the Wizengamot.”

He did not see a pair of dark eyes turn in his direction, when Abraxas agreed to help.

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It was even more ostentatious than it would be in the future. The colour scheme was silver and navy, in a good-sized hall, not the small space that would be used in the future. Clearly, Dippet felt like he could allow Slughorn more leniency than would be given to him in the future.

Silver material was draped on every table and chair. Diaphanous, navy material hung from the ceiling in billows, accompanied by a light layer of smoke from a baby dragon hanging in a cage near the desserts.

There were many more people than the party Hadrian had attended before. Slughorn was laughing with a group of men, who Abraxas and Orion Black were shaking hands with. The students invited from Years 4 and upwards were all mingling, some dancing on a make-shift dance floor with a band performing on a raised stage.

“And who might you be?”

Hadrian started at the sudden appearance of a man to his side. Shockingly, he knew him. He quickly schooled his features. “Hadrian Peverell, and yourself?” He took a drink that was offered to him on a platter by a sixth year girl.

“Sanguini.”

Hadrian took a gulp of the mead, turning to face the man. “What is a vampire doing here?”

Thin lips curled up into a smile. The man’s oiled back hair glistened in the light, reminding him of Snape. “Rubbing elbows with some of our future leaders, of course. A Peverell. You have a fine legacy.”

“So everyone says,” he commented dryly. “What does a vampire look for at these events?”

“An open ear, perhaps an open eye also.” Those black eyes gleamed like marbles.

Hadrian skimmed the guests. Sanguini came alone, much like last time - though a guest in the future. Vampires and werewolves they had studied in Defense, to a gruesome scale. Both were demonised by the wizarding world.

“Do you have much luck?”

Sanguini chuckled. “Never, but one day...perhaps.”

Hadrian wanted to grimace at what he knew. He had already seen Sanguini - barely looking older than he did now - standing in Hogwarts at another Slug Club Party, with no one to talk to. In these very walls, students fifty years in the future would still learn how they were big, bad and dangerous.

“Do vampires hold a chair at the Wizengamot?”

“We have never been asked.”

Hadrian cocked his head to the side slightly. “So, your people’s voices are never heard?”

“Never, Mr Peverell.” Sanguini put his hand in his waistcoat pocket. “But I have a good feeling about you.” He withdrew something and pressed it into Hadrian’s palm. “If you are interested in speaking to me again, please say my name into the coin.”

As Sanguini whisked away, he opened his hand to see a metallic, ruby-red coin with an intricate pattern spiralling into the centre. Hadrian pocketed it, unable to see the vampire anymore.

Hadrian could not stomach any more of the heavy mead, placing it on

the nearest small table to him. In his pocket, he flipped the heavy coin, pondering on the vampire's words. Since yesterday, Abraxas had been too busy with his own studying to start Hadrian's journey into wizarding politics. Hadrian had to make sure he was prepared for next week's rounds of mock exams. They did not have mock exams in the future, so this was a new concept. Dumbledore loved cancelling exams.

"A bit over the top, is it not?"

Hadrian felt himself smile at the familiar tone, turning to see his sandy-blonde friend settle beside him. "A little bit."

"The important thing is to restrain yourself with who you will greet." Cassius grinned. "Otherwise, they all start to blur into one. My father already has my future planned out, so I just come here for the drink and music." The smile cracked a little.

"So, Slughorn's career talk was pretty useless too?"

Cassius gave a delicate snort, brushing his shoulder against Hadrian's. "Did he start drinking in front of you too? He is in constant supply from my Uncle, needs a crate every two weeks at the moment. Someday, I want to intercept one, throw a good Slytherin party when we win the next Quidditch season."

"How are we doing?"

"Slytherin?" Cassius pulled a face. "Behind Gryffindor. They have Enoch McClaggan and no one can seem to get the edge on him. He is fast." He paused. "Do you fancy having a game this week? I want to see how good you really are, or if you are just trying to impress me."

Hadrian flushed at the wink, his stomach tightening. He had missed quidditch. His to-do list was growing so rapidly, he was kissing goodbye to finding any way home...even if Dippet said that it was impossible. Then again, it had always been a good stress reliever, and he would need it after these gruelling exams. "Just me and you, first to get the snitch wins. I don't want it to be a game with lots of people."

Cassius' face brightened. "Fantastic." He stepped forward and then held out a hand. "Dance?"

Hadrian's back stiffened. "I can't dance."

“I am a good lead.”

He rolled his shoulders, trying to relieve the tension. “Won’t people find it weird?”

Cassius rolled his eyes playfully. “What, two men? How long have you been out of proper wizard culture? It is fine for socialising, to dance. That is what we are doing, right?” He nodded his head to the dance floor where young ladies danced, men and together.

Hadrian’s tongue swiped over his lower lip before taking the offered hand. He allowed Cassius to pull him over to the floor, near to the musicians. Never had he danced with another boy. The only dancing he had ever attempted had been with poor Parvati at the Yule Ball.

He was hyper-sensitive to every muscle and joint in Cassius’ warm hand. The lights were dim for the winter evening and specks of snow fell from the ceiling but disappeared above the heads of the dancers.

A hand slid around his waist and Hadrian stood there, face hurting with his blush. His hand squeezed at his side.

“On my shoulder,” Cassius murmured gently.

Hadrian placed his hand, aware of how close they were at this moment. Cassius was just about the same height, maybe a couple of inches taller. It wouldn’t be hard when he had spent his childhood locked in a cupboard.

They swayed to the music, feet carrying them slowly through the other dancers. Hadrian had averted his eyes, not able to look his friend in the eye at this close proximity.

“Were you talking to that vampire?”

The question startled him into looking into blue eyes. “Sanguini? Yes.”

Cassius’ mouth twisted. “I do not understand why Slughorn invited him. Bringing a vampire here is dangerous. I hope he did not say anything unnecessary.”

Hadrian’s jaw clenched, something inside him shattering a little. “Why would he be dangerous?”

“They are very much an unknown. The unknown scares people.”

“Not much difference between a pair of fangs and a wand,” Hadrian

commented. “Maybe they are unknown because no one has bothered to see their side.”

Cassius hummed. “Maybe that will be your career, Hadrian, Professional Vampire Protector.”

Despite his ill feeling towards Cassius’ attitude, he felt himself smile again and sent his friend a droll look. “Shut up.”

They danced in silence for a few moments, Hadrian breathing in the blonde’s citrus scent that was everywhere. The music - a euphony of strings - had slowed somewhat.

“Yule is coming.”

Hadrian murmured his understanding that it was.

Cassius cleared his throat. “I was wondering if you wanted to join my family in celebrations during the break, considering…” he trailed off, voice tightening.

Considering your family is dead ; Hadrian’s mind filled the unsaid gap. He looked up into the boy’s expectant face. “I would love to, but...I really need to catch up on everything here, with the library at my disposal. It would be good to have some time to get used to Hogwarts.” *And get used to this new time* .

“I understand.” Cassius went to say something else, but something cut him off.

Hadrian barely managed to react before Riddle had taken his hand from Cassius, who was backing away, head down in a slight bow. The hurt of Cassius’ subservience combined in a sickening mix with the irritation at Riddle for his presumptuous butting in. When he went to yank his hand out, the fingers wrapped around his tightened painfully, joints protesting against the pressure.

“Now, now, Hadrian...we do not want to cause a scene, do we?” Riddle murmured, other hand taking his waist and pulling him closer.

“Maybe I do,” he replied through gritted teeth. His hand ended up taking Riddle’s shoulder, despite his words. “Although, I think you have already created one.” Cassius was joining Silas and Dorian on the outskirts of the dance floor, all the boys watching them with curiosity burning on their faces.

Riddle started to move, leading him across the floor. His cinnamon eyes never left Hadrian's, as if searching for something hidden in those emerald depths. Hadrian's scar pulsed, his magic core unfurling. He tried to move out of the other Slytherin's grasp, panicking about what might happen if he remained, but Riddle held on tighter.

" *Priori Incantatem* ." Riddle's curl hung over his forehead, his high cheekbones stark in the dim light of the dancefloor. "Brother wands, which means that we can never fight without that occurring. You did not look surprised."

Hadrian swallowed, trying to look away but failing. His Occlumens shields were up, having practiced a lot since the duel, but he knew Riddle could rip them away and destroy him in an instant. It was their magic that was catching his attention. The tingle of his scar was nothing to the dancing of their magic between their bodies.

"I have allowed you your secrets, allowed you to join in on our ritual." Riddle's voice was low. "I grow weary of not knowing who you are, Hadrian. A boy who can speak to snakes. A boy who uses a false name."

"What are you talking about?" He grew rigid, once more trying to remove himself, but instead his magic continued to dance and merge with Riddle's, shackling them together.

"You have read to me Salazar Slytherin's words, written in Parseltongue. You have understood me when I have spoken it, only barely managing not to react." Riddle's face was pulled into an intense expression, something twisting in those dark eyes. "I had my suspicions. You really think it was Avery's idea to get you the snake?"

Hadrian's mouth was dry. "Stop." He threw up a wandless *Muffliato* , creating a sudden background of buzzing.

Riddle's face lowered, mere inches away. "Why? Is it hard to hear the truth?" His hand on Hadrian's waist tightening, pulling them physically closer.

"People will-"

"There is a Disillusionment charm already up. Though, that charm you have used is certainly useful." Riddle whisked them away to the shadowy corner of the dancefloor, away from most of the guests. "I have checked on the Peverells, and your line is very dead. I do not believe you are who you say you are. I saw your use of magic during

Priori Incantatem , and a slither of what looked like an older Slughorn. In your mind, I saw myself in the Chamber of Secrets, standing over a flame-haired girl. A place you should not know. A girl I do not know."

Hadrian felt his back touch the stone wall, the tingle in his scar a slight burn that made it hard to construct viable thoughts. "No." He realised he was repeating the word when he felt Riddle's body press into his, pinning him physically to the wall.

"*Yes*," Riddle hissed. "*You are an intruder.*"

"*No*," Hadrian replied, eyes flashing with fury. "*Let me go, Riddle, or I will make you regret it.*"

Something changed in Riddle's expression, darkening his cinnamon eyes. Their magic sang between them, bright and dark at the same time, swirling until it was hard to distinguish between the two boys.

"*No…I don't think that I will.*" Riddle's face moved lower, so that their lips were a breath away.

Hadrian swallowed, heart undulating rapidly against his rib cage. "*What do you want from me*?"

"*Isn't that the question*?" came the deep purr that reverberated through their bodies. "*Join me.*"

Hadrian grimaced. "*No. I will never be one of your followers, Riddle*."

A smile curved those lips. "*Our magic…joined like this…we could accomplish anything…everything.*"

"*Fuck-"*

Lips covered his. Hadrian's eyes grew as the magic became a maelstrom inside his body, joined with the hard press against his mouth. He shoved as hard as he could, Riddle stumbling back a little before he caught himself.

The magic snapped back between them.

Riddle schooled his expression into an infuriatingly neutral expression. "Think about it some more Hadrian, but I should let you know that I will not take 'no' as your answer." The spells dropped and the Slytherin strode over to join the party.

Hadrian placed a finger to his lips, which still throbbed from the kiss. His second kiss...from the man who would kill his parents. Why would Riddle do that? But it was his magic that tore him from that thought. His hand travelled up to his scar, but he hissed and drew it away. The skin was sensitive to the touch, sending tingles through every one of his limbs. His magic was jittery, as if it did not belong in his body.

And something else. Something was different. There was an emptiness he had not noticed before.

“Hadrian!” It was Slughorn, bringing over a group of mostly men.

He looked around but Riddle had vanished. His time was running out with the other boy, and he did need to make a choice. It made him feel sick, with the responsibility of the decision...knowing that he will change things forever. And there would be no going back.

Chapter 13

Chapter Notes

> Thank you all for your lovely comments! I have opened it for anyone to comment now (having not realised I left it so closed!)
>
> I hope you enjoy this!

November passed in a heartbeat, as did the beginning of December. Snow had enclosed the students inside Hogwarts, a winter even more harsh than the usual Scottish standards. Quidditch matches were almost too cold to attend. Hadrian had not managed his match with Cassius after the mock examinations were finally over, with the extreme change of weather and the disquiet Hadrian felt on a daily basis.

Ever since the incident with Riddle at Slughorn's party, his magic had been...aggravated. That, and his mind seemed to go over the 'kiss' with Riddle. Why had the Slytherin done that? Too many times he had found his mind wandering, almost with grim fascination of his second-ever kiss being stolen so roughly by the future-Dark Lord. It had felt like pure domination, especially considering he had been about to tell Riddle to 'fuck off'.

His marks were very good in most subjects, the only ones he was slipping on being Ancient Runes and Arithmancy. Of course, Tom Riddle achieved the highest marks in the year group in all subjects apart from one. Dumbledore had mentioned how smart he had been at school. The one that Riddle did not achieve top marks in was Defense against the Dark Arts. Hadrian had secured that. It was a duel against a Ravenclaw that secured his top place, using an array of 'school-friendly' spells and his trusty Patronus that he knew would impress. Professor Merrythought couldn't stop talking about it.

It was the day before everyone went home, and the weather had eased enough for the game against Cassius. Hadrian handled the school broom and winced at the poor handling and direction it had. He had completely forgotten they would be fifty years behind in technology. They even swerved left if you did not have a good enough grip and a pinch of patience. It would be one of the earliest Comets. Comet 140.

Luckily, he had gotten to the pitch earlier for a quick session beforehand to warm up. He was sitting atop the broom, way above the

training ground, eating the apple he had grabbed for lunch.

Hogwarts looked utterly beautiful. Its spires and turrets were clear of the fog that had looked like it had set up permanent residence last week. Tendrils of sunlight wrapped around each tower, almost comfortingly. Hogwarts had always been home. Before his Sixth year had started, when Dumbledore sat in the Dursleys living room, he had said that Privet Dive was a 'home' to Harry Potter and that was why the protection around his house had been strong - along with Petunia being a blood relative. But that was a lie. He had felt more at home one night at Hogwarts, than he had ever been there.

There was a thick covering of snow on the castle and trees surrounding it. It did not look real. Despite the change in time period, it was still breath-taking. He still felt safe inside its walls (even if he knew there was a basilisk deep in the bowels that apparently Onyx had a friendship with).

Hadrian took another large bite from the shiny, green apple before vanishing its remains. He spotted a figure moving out of the changing rooms, broom in hand.

Cassius mounted his broom, ascending to Hadrian's height. "How did you find the broom?" he called over the distance.

"Quite standard." Hadrian shrugged. "It will do. Do you have the snitch?"

Cassius reached into his quidditch robe pocket, pulling out the golden orb, which unfurled its wings. "Of course." He grinned. "So, we give it ten seconds when released, and then the first one to catch it wins. Understand, Peverell?"

Hadrian returned the grin, watching Cassius' floppy blonde hair get teased with the wind. "Scared, Avery?"

"Never." Cassius released the snitch.

Both boys' eyes followed the golden ball whisky away, whispering the countdown to ten. Hadrian gripped the broom, arching his back. When he hit ten, both of them sped off.

The wind whistled in his ears, and although it was cold his body was up for the race. Adrenaline pumped through his system, everything disappearing apart from the driving need to capture the snitch before Avery.

Avery was fast, weaving in and out as he descended to scope out the ball, trying to throw Hadrian off. Hadrian, however, had made his way to the centre of the training pitch. It was much better without glasses. Hermione used to charm his lenses against the rain, but this was a whole new level. Knowing there had been a cure - however temporary - only served to inflame his anger towards his ex-Headmaster.

There.

A flourish of gold. Hadrian shot forward, eyes honing in on the fluttering ball.

Cassius was swift in seeing Hadrian's change of direction, swooping down to try and outpace the raven-haired Slytherin. The wind howled in their ears, cold air pinching their hands that gripped the handles of the brooms.

Faster. Hadrian pushed with all of his might, willing it forward.

The snitch rose abruptly in the air, sensing the two boys on its tail. They both followed, Cassius now matching his speed.

Hadrian whipped up, inwardly cursing at the resistance from the broom. Never had he missed his Firebolt so much. He spun up in the air, and when he risked a glance at Avery, he realised the boy was following his movements more than the snitch.

A smirk curled his mouth. Hadrian zoned in on the snitch, and suddenly pulled away, spiralling up into the air. Cassius followed him up, but Hadrian had never let his eyes roam from the golden ball that hovered back to the ground. When he was high enough and aware that the other Slytherin was bombing up to meet his height, Hadrian released.

His broom hurtled to the ground. Hadrian let out a joyful laugh at the free-falling sensation. The grass was getting nearer...and nearer… His hair whipped against his scalp, pulling on the strands as if nature was panicking and trying to pull him back up.

At the last moment, Hadrian pulled up the handle with all his might. His feet brushed the dewy grass as he lunged out and grasped his prize.

The wings fluttered uselessly in his palm. Hadrian grinned up at Cassius, who was descending rapidly after him, blue eyes as wide as

The Bloody Baron's waist.

"What was *that* ?" Cassius exclaimed. His booted feet hit the ground, perfect hair now in disarray. "You could have *died* ."

Hadrian laughed. "But I won." He pinched the snitch between his forefinger and thumb, revealing it to his friend.

"You are mad." Cassius shook his head. "But that was amazing."

He hopped off his broom. "Dinner?" Striding over to the changing rooms, he was aware of the other boy following him.

"Where did you learn to do that?"

"It just was the right thing to do," he answered, entering the empty building.

Cassius gave a graceful snort. "Come on, Hadrian. You must have had some tutor - been some kind of child prodigy...or something?"

Hadrian placed the Comet back in the broom rack, placing the snitch into a wooden hole where it would be cleansed. "I didn't ride a broom until I was eleven. No tutor, just myself."

"I am going to quit my position as seeker, please take it!"

He arched an eyebrow at him as he started to shrug off the flying robes Cassius had loaned him. "I have enough to catch up on. You saw my scores in Runes and Arithmancy."

"But the glory!" Cassius breathed. "Slytherin would win!"

Hadrian grinned at his friend's enthusiasm. "Well, I prefer just a quiet match with you. But, if you want, I can think about it. Besides, you were not bad...you just need a few pointers." He pulled off the robes, folding it onto the bench he stood at, and pulled off his fitted, black undershirt.

"A few pointers?" Cassius had removed his flying robes and stood there, next to Hadrian.

"You need to watch the snitch instead of the other seeker." He turned to face those blue eyes, who were watching him intently.

"It is hard, when that other seeker is you."

Hadrian's throat tightened when he tried to swallow. "Cassius-"

The other Slytherin's pale hand came up, to move a wayward raven lock from Hadrian forehead, eliciting a shudder from the ex-boy-who-lived. "I thought I was being obvious. The lunch, the scarf, the dance at the party…but I guess I am a bit rusty."

"What?" He blushed at how hoarse his voice sounded.

Cassius stepped forward, closing the small distance between them so that their chests touched - Hadrian's bare and Cassius' still clothed. "Can I?"

Nothing came to Hadrian's mind. It was empty, shocked into utter submission by the question. The hand that had touched his hair, trailed down to cup his jaw, thumb caressing the skin. He did not know who moved first, but he found his lips pressing against soft, pliable ones.

What did he need to do with his hands? Was he doing it properly? God, he hoped Cassius did not cry… Hadrian's mind spun with a multitude of worries until Cassius' hand moved once more to the back of his head, pressing their lips closer. He gasped at the sensation, and the other Slytherin's tongue swiped in, brushing his.

There was a moan. Was it him? Hadrian's mind fell apart as he hesitantly reciprocated, their kiss deepening further. His senses were full of *Cassius* - his lemony smell and the taste of his friend's mouth.

Seconds...minutes later - he had completely zoned out of being aware of any time - Cassius withdrew, both of them panting lightly. He pressed his forehead against Hadrian's.

"I am going to miss you over Christmas," the boy breathed. "I wish you would reconsider my invitation."

Hadrian blinked, lost in those deep blue eyes. "I know."

Cassius pressed another, brief kiss to Hadrian's reddened lips. "I like you, Hadrian. You are unlike anyone else." He gave a small smile. "Let me take you out again, when we return?"

He could only give a nod in response. Cassius laughed before starting to get changed into his casual robes for dinner.

Hadrian was slow in pulling his clothes off, feeling self-conscious for

the first time. The scars littered his body, ones he did not want to explain. Plus, his mind was in overdrive. It had been his second kiss with another boy - if he could call what he had with Riddle a 'kiss'. Out of three kisses, two had now been with the same sex. Was he gay? Vernon was a raging homophobe - switching off the television when anything like 'that' was being 'paraded around'. He always ranted about the 'queers' and the 'poofs', especially on how society was pushing these views on 'impressionable minds'. Once, he had even threatened Dudley that if he ever turned out to be a 'poof', he would beat it out of him with his Smeltings stick.

His kiss was Cho had been...awful, a mix of confusion and salty tears. Ginny had always been infatuated with him, even before she had even met him. She was pretty, in her own way. But Cassius was extraordinarily handsome, with those blue eyes and soft lips.

How was being gay seen in the 1940s wizarding world? Hadrian quickly stopped those thoughts. It was not to say he was gay. He would try and see if he could still appreciate how attractive the ladies were in Slytherin.

But he had already agreed to go on another 'date' with Cassius, and his heart would not stop beating rapidly.

Hadrian bit his lower lip, pulling his robes on. At least he had Christmas break to think it all through.

"Ready?"

He nodded, gathering up the borrowed robes and charming it to pocket sized before he handed it over. "Thanks for letting me borrow them."

"Anytime." Cassius winked as they exited the building and meandered over to the castle.

***

Slytherin was empty. A first year and a couple of third year students had remained, but kept away from Hadrian. In fact, he barely saw them at all, especially given that he spent most of his time in the library, swamped in books.

The first few days had passed too quickly. He drank in the information he gathered from the books and old newspapers. The research with the Hallows had begun with numerous readings of The Tale of the Three Brothers. Grindelwald was apparently after them, to become some self-dubbed 'Master of Death'. That research had led him down the path of chasing down Grindelwald's entire past, leaning on the archived newspapers for information.

It had led down to a person he least expected. He should have seen it really. It was pure naivety that he did not. Grindelwald had published something when he had left Durmstrang, a few years after perhaps, about how muggles were vermin and that it was wizards who needed to take back control. At the end of that article, Grindelwald had made notes of travelling to solidify his research into the power of wizards, with one Albus Dumbledore.

That was why Hadrian was standing in front of Dumbledore's office.

The door opened, and Hadrian entered as a soft voice bid him to do so. Entering, Hadrian was unsurprised by the ostentatious decor. Lots of coloured fabrics and strange objects that twisted and twirled next to the books on the numerous bookcases around the large space. There were a few awards hanging on the walls: *British Youth Representative to the Wizagamont* , *Gold Medal-Winner for Ground-Breaking Contribution to the International Alchemical Conference in Cairo,* and *Winner of the Barnadas Finkley Prize for Exceptional Spell-Casting* ...amongst others.The perks of being Albus Dumbledore. What Hadrian had to keep at the forefront of his mind was that he was not dealing with a stupid man.

"Mr Peverell."

There was surprise in that voice, and it empowered him a little as he took the chair on the other side of the desk. "Thank you for seeing me over the break, Professor." He had his Occlumency shields up. Like Riddle, the man could plough through...but Hadrian knew Dumbledore would never do that.

"Sherbert lemon?" A slightly wrinkled hand gestured to the glass bowl of luminous yellow sweets sitting on the edge.

"No, thank you."

"A tea perhaps, then?"

Hadrian declined once more. Given he was about to broach a topic the

other man would not like, he wanted to avoid any tampering through food or drinks. It horrified him that he even had thoughts that Dumbledore would do that, but he was through being naive.

“Then, how can I help you, Mr Peverell?” Those eyes searched his, and found nothing. There was no twinkle, only the type of suspicion that Hadrian had seen in Riddle’s diary aimed at the young Dark Lord.

“I was wondering if you could tell me about Grindelwald, Professor.” Before Dumbledore could interject, he continued hastily, “My mother was killed by his followers, and she spoke nothing of the man. She shielded me from it all. I was looking into him in the library, when I found an article about the both of you travelling together for a while.”

Dumbledore was silent for a long time, a finger tapping on the edge of his desk. “Grindelwald is a...secretive man, Hadrian. I cannot claim to know a lot about him at all.”

Hadrian shrugged. “Can you tell me what you know? I want to know about the man who murdered my mother.”

“For what end?”

“What do you mean?”

Dumbledore sighed. “Sometimes, knowing more can make the task of revenge or forgiveness a hard road to travel.”

He gave a hard smile. “I can cope, Professor.”

“Grindelwald is a...disillusioned man. He fights under the motto ‘For the Greater Good’ - a concept that he believes we should rule over muggles.”

There was a flicker of *something* on that wizening face that Hadrian latched onto. “Have you ever believed that?”

Dumbeldore could not hide the shadow of shock that flitted across his face. He drew a hand down his eyes, rubbing them tiredly. “Grindelwald is persuasive. He attracts followers to him like moths to a flame. That is the true power of a Dark Lord, seduction into their beliefs. To answer your question, Mr Peverell, we all make mistakes in our youth and our only chance is to rectify that in our future.”

Hadrian shifted in the chair. Dumbledore had not been a youth when he had first visited Tom Riddle in the orphanage, where he had revealed the little boy that he was a thief and that talking to snakes was not 'normal'. Would Riddle have turned out differently if he had someone like Dumbledore to coach him, rather than embarrass and judge him?

"Do those people deserve to die?"

"Grindelwald is a highly intelligent man, who I believe can be redeemed."

"When does he go past redemption? He has killed so many."

Dumbledore grimaced. "I believe we all have our own lines that people can cross. Yours and mine, may differ for example."

"How does Grindelwald seduce people into killing or adopting such a totalitarian approach?"

"Power is addictive." Dumbledore sipped his tea, not meeting the vivid emerald eyes opposite. "Magic and good looks can get you to very high places, where people want to be with you...so that you feel their attention is on you. People like Grindelwald make others feel special, even when he holds them in contempt."

An absolute parallel to Riddle. Could Hadrian actually do anything to stop Riddle going down his future path? It seemed so final. "You were his friend, could you not speak reason to him?"

In the future, Hadrian knew that the Professor would defeat Grindelwald, that was common knowledge. He knew that Dumbledore would not kill him, but the Dark Lord would be sentenced to live out his years in a prison. However, Harry Potter had been tasked with the destruction of Voldemort, seeking out horcruxes to kill the man.

"Reason is only effective when the other party is willing to listen," Dumbledore explained.

Hadrian nodded with understanding. "Can I ask, Sir, why would you be friends with someone who was expelled for use of extreme Dark Arts? I believe you are fully against that ideology."

Again, there was a long silence. "The only answer I can give you, Mr Peverell, is that sometimes, in your youth, you can be vain and believe that you know better than everyone else. We may live the rest of our

lives venturing for clemency for our past crimes."

"Thank you Sir, and I just have one more question."

Dumbledore nodded wearily. "Yes?"

"One of the Hallows is claimed to be a Cloak of Invisibility. How would you tell, against a usual Invisibility Cloak?"

A grey-auburn eyebrow rose. "The Hallows are a mere myth, Mr Peverell."

"Theoretically." He gave a charming smile.

Another, longer sip of tea. "The Cloak of Invisibility would last forever in its charm to avoid detection. Other...replicas would become less effective over time, usually a few years. The Cloak would last forever in its charms, never wavering. There are those who believe the user to be completely protected underneath from all spells, but that may be less true."

Hadrian had gotten what he wanted. He stood. "Thank you, Professor, for your time."

The smile he received was stretched. "That is alright, Mr Peverell. However, if I could give you words to leave by - the Hallows are a bedtime story for children. One would not be smart to chase after a fairytale. Too many good men have been lost in the quest."

Giving a final thanks, Hadrian exited the office, feeling lighter in step. The Hallows existed. He had once owned one, without even knowing...handed to him by Dumbledore himself. There was no other explanation. A cloak that had existed for decades, no - centuries - without losing any part of its power. Now, all he had to do, was take it back.

Chapter 14

Chapter Notes

I hope you enjoy this installment!

It clears up some questions some of you had in the last chapter's comments about the cloak etc. I had trouble with allergies so apologies it is not as long as the last couple of chapters. I will make up for it with the events of the next chapter!

Hadrian adjusted the scarf around his neck - Cassius' scarf, which he had not let Hadrian return after that Hogsmeade lunch together. His friend had also sent him a Christmas gift. A brand new Cleansweep Four with a message to really think about becoming Seeker. Broomsticks had been gifted to him in the future, but this one had felt...different. Cassius had kissed him. Over the past two weeks of the Christmas holidays, he had tried checking out any female in his year group or above that was left. Romance had never been his priority. Ron and Hermione knew how obsessed he had been with chasing after Malfoy, so maybe there had been something there. Not that Draco Malfoy was his choice at all. Besides, no one male or female had caught his eye in his ventures to try and figure out his sexuality.

Dippet stared at him across the desk, his face neutral. They had sat in silence for a good few minutes, the Headmaster expecting Hadrian to break it first. It was clear that the older man had not expected Hadrian to actually turn up when requested.

"The weather has been...seasonal," Hadrian commented.

A pained look flitted over the Headmaster's face. "Hadrian, really?"

He smirked. "So, you did not want to talk about the weather? This isn't that kind of chat?"

"I am pleased over your results, especially your Defense against the Dark Arts. A patronus." Dippet looked over the parchment laid out on the desk before him. "Professor Merrythought is singing your name to the staff body. There are a few...other areas to work on."

"Yes." Hadrian rested back in the chair. "I have already started work on them. Arithmancy and Ancient Rules are electives in the future, but my Housemates are helping."

“You are applying yourself…and with that, can I ask what you have decided moving forward?”

Hadrian averted his eyes to the stone phoenix statue that was wrapped around the side of a large, oak bookcase. “The future I came from…may not exist anymore. If your friend stated that the past was changed after five hours…well, I have already been here two and a bit months.”

“Perhaps you need not worry, given that your interactions have been limited to Hogwarts?”

His mouth twisted. Oh, he would love to believe that. But his fate had been sealed when he had caught Riddle’s eye. Something had happened to his magic during that ritual he had joined. That strange, empty feeling had grown every day of the holiday. Too often, he had found himself staring into space and unable to concentrate.

“I believe, given my knowledge of the future…that I would be right in my assumptions. Besides, I have a choice, don’t I?” He paused. “I could lock myself away trying to go back to a broken future, where the people around me die. Or…I try and make it different. I would like to spend some time with your Unspeakable friend to talk about it all. If I am never born in the future, then do I not exist at all? Or if I am born, could two of us exist together?”

Dippet hummed speculatively. “Yes. No doubt he will want to meet you. Under our Vow, I will only be able to say so much.”

“Yes.” He chewed on his lower lip.

“How do you feel about the idea of not returning?”

Hadrian closed his eyes. “I try not to think about it. I leave everything behind…my friends, my home, my reality…”

“You also leave behind your abusers, and have a chance of saving the ones you love.”

He took a deep breath in. “I have to craft a whole new identity here.”

“That can be both an exciting and daunting prospect.” He paused. “I admit, I worry about the influence Tom Riddle may have on you…if your recount of who he is, is true, given the new friendships you have forged.”

Hadrian released a dry laugh. “Headmaster, he killed my parents.”

“On the contrary, he hasn’t yet, Hadrian.”

He sighed, rubbing his left temple. Oh, he knew that.

Dippet dropped a sugar cube into the cup of tea he poured. “Have you thought about your influence on him?”

“Riddle is already set in his ways.”

“Is he?” Dippet stirred his tea. “Anyway, Hadrian, I brought you here initially to talk about the plans for the school year and going forward. Given your circumstances, I believe that we will have to make provisions for you to stay here over summer. It will give you time to get acquainted with the knowledge of the library, and to provide you a safe place. You are now of wizarding age, which means you can use magic outside the walls freely. Have you decided on your new birthdate, regardless?”

“The 31st of December 1926.”

Dippet gave him a long look before scribbling it down on one of the parchments in front of him. “I see.” He placed down the quill. “So, Mr Peverell, I have secured you into the school’s orphan funding, which is all linked to the coin Professor Slughorn handed over to you. Your books, robes and essential school supplies are always paid by the Ministry. Each month, you will receive ten galleons.”

Hadrian just nodded along. The only possessions he had (from his own time) was an old copy of Advanced Potions that had gotten him into this mess to begin with and his wand. In his rush to get rid of the book, he had swept up to the dormitories, dumping his Invisibility Cloak and the Marauder's Map. There was no way he was going to bring them to Snape’s office, lest the guy make Harry empty his pockets.

“I take it you have been keeping up your shields?”

“Yes, Sir.”

Dippet pursed his lips before meeting emerald eyes. “Given your past, I would advise that we book you in appointments with Healer Roberts.”

Hadrian raised an eyebrow. “Why?”

“To speak through your childhood trauma, and the trauma left behind by the incidents so far in your schooling years.”

He shook his head. “No.” At the Headmaster’s speculative look, he sighed. “I just want to move forward, but I will keep it in mind.”

“Fine, Mr Peverell.”

Hadrian stood up, thanking the man before leaving. He swept through the castle, finally ending up at the statue of the One-Eyed-Witch, muttering the password: *Dissendium* .

It took an hour to meander down the long passage, emerging into Honeyduke’s cellar. He cast a quick disillusionment spell, heading up into the main body of the shop where a spattering of locals scanned the shelves.

When outside, he travelled swiftly down an alleyway and disapperated.

Stomach wrenching, Hadrian forced his arm out to support him, hand clenching around the iron railing. Ever since the 31st, he had made journeys out to Hogsmeade each afternoon to practice apparating elsewhere. It was lucky that in his own time he had gotten practice, and it had taken a lot of attempts at longer lengths (with a lot of chocolate to ease his stomach).

It was the longest he had travelled so far - Scotland to the West Country. Hadrian squeezed his eyes shut, getting his bearings before opening them once more.

There was no snow, just a smattering of wetness on the grass that made it glisten. He was in a small graveyard with rows upon rows of tombstones. Some were crumbling, the claws of time wiping away the names etched into the stones. His eyes flicked over them, seeing names he was very familiar with: *Dumbledore, Potter, Peverell, Abbott …*

Lamps were flickering with the first signs of life as darkness started to draw in, in the late afternoon. The houses were all very old, with exposed wooden beams from the outside and quaint thatched roofs. A few people were walking past on the cobblestone street, arm in arm as they spent the new year together. In his future, his parents probably did the same before they had Harry. They would have only been twenty-one when they had him. It was a bizarre thought to think that he was not far off that age now.

Hadrian walked out of the graveyard, burying his lower face into the green folds of the scarf around his neck. Luckily, his robes would look much like a long winter coat.

He passed down many houses, feeling the magic of each house he walked past. Not all of them had magic, revealing the existence of Muggles living beside wizards unknowingly. He stopped as an old woman exited one of the houses he was nearest to - a Muggle.

“Excuse me.”

Her head rose from where she had just locked her door, a smile crossing her red-painted lips. “Yes, young lad?”

“I am looking for a relative of mine - Fleamont Potter. Do you know where he lives?”

Her very wrinkled face pulled down into sorrow. “Another orphan? I am so sorry, my boy.” She paused, slipping her key into her bag. “Fleamont, yes, he lives at the cottage on the other side of the church, just on the outskirts - number three.”

“Thank you.” Hadrian left the woman to follow her instructions, finally standing across the road from the two-storey building. He used the shadows to mask himself, watching from the high wall that separated the church from the graveyard.

There were two lights on in the bottom floor. Hadrian drew out a few biscuits from his pocket before sitting down on the cold pavement. He cast a cushioning charm and settled himself in for the evening.

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It was the day before term would resume, that Hadrian made his move. He had spent seven days waiting in Godric’s Hollow, outside the Potter’s residence. Every afternoon until dinner, some even through dinner. He could not risk too much attention on him missing meals, so he made sure there was no pattern. Even apparating had become a lot easier.

Seeing Fleamont and Euphemia Potter together, coming in and out of the house, made him feel a little odd. At the beginning, part of him

wanted to walk up to them and just go out and spill everything. His grandparents that he had never known. They could take him in. They could become a family.

However, it was all a pipe dream. One he could not be sucked into.

It was all about the cloak now.

A few times, he had gone up to the house, felt its wards. One time, they had left the kitchen window open a little, and he had managed to slip his arm through.

Fleamont and Euphemia Potter always went for a long stroll at about four o'clock in the afternoon, which would last an hour. They would walk through the village, before going out into the countryside to sit by a stream for a while.

Hadrian strode up to the backdoor, that they left unlocked. With the wards, the Potters would assume safety. Naive. It seemed to be a Potter trait, he thought acidically. He turned the handle, and walked into the kitchen. It was full with the fragrant smell of basil and thyme, mixed with the cooking of chicken. He bent down to peer into the oven, his stomach rumbling at the look of the pale meat browning.

He quickly straightened, knowing that he was on a hunt for the cloak. Hadrian started to go through the rooms downstairs, not taking too long because the cottage only had a living area and a dining area that were cosy but everything was neatly ordered.

Upstairs was a different story. There was a main bedroom, bathroom, a study and a potions laboratory. It was satirical to think that his family had a history of brewing, especially with a school history of Snape belittling his efforts. He started with the bedroom, going through the trunks and focusing mostly on Fleamont's belongings, given that Euphemia had married into the family. It was difficult making sure that everything went back the same way. Getting slightly sweaty with the ticking time, he found himself in the study.

A door sounded downstairs, and voices in the living room.

Hadrian cursed, charming his feet quiet and slowly pushing the door to. He rolled his tight shoulders and started to resume his search. The study was a mess. There were boxes, trunks and nooks and crannies stuffed with junk.

Suddenly, there were footsteps - wood creaking underfoot. Hadrian

spun around, eyes blowing wide open when he came face-to-face with Fleamont Potter.

Before the older man had a chance to react, Hadrian wordlessly cast ' *Imperio* '. He leaned in as those blue eyes became slightly milky-white in colour. "Turn around, forget you saw anyone here. Go downstairs to your wife and help her with dinner. You have no interest in going upstairs again for the next few hours," he hissed.

With jagged movements, Fleamont turned around. He shook his body in the doorway before resuming his usual walk. Hadrian held his breath until he heard the man greet his wife loudly, with warmth in his voice.

"Fuck, fuck, fuck," he bit out, resuming his search. How many laws was he breaking right now? Breaking into his ancestors home...using an Unforgivable...and intention to steal…

Then he saw it. The material slipped through his fingers, like unicorn blood - thick and silvery. Hadrian grinned. He pulled it out of the dusty box, grin turning to a grimace at the state of how it had been kept. In an instant, he did not regret anything. His cloak was back in his hands.

One of the Hallows.

Hadrian draped it over his shoulders, cocooning himself in its folds until he was invisible. He breathed in before disapparating out to Hogsmede.

Snow was falling all around, and Hadrian looked up at the air and took another big breath of frigid air. It entered his lungs, stretching them to capacity. His hands bunched in the familiar folds of his cloak. Out of the Hallows, this was - in his opinion - the most powerful. To hide from Death was stuff of legends. An impossible feat. But now possible. But it was also a gateway to the future - Harry's past. He had discovered the Mirror of Erised with its shield, found out Sirius Black's relationship to him by spying on Fudge...amongst other adventures. Such fond memories woven into this lustrous fabric.

There was a slight spring in his step as he returned to the castle. As he got close, he pulled off his cloak and stashed it in his satchel. By the state of that study in the Potter's place, Fleamont would not be missing it anytime soon. It was a travesty, keeping a family heirloom stuffed away in some dusty old box.

Hadrian had never used the Imperius curse before, and he felt awfully cheery after casting it. After all, it had paved the way to him reclaiming his property. It was definitely one of the least dangerous of the Unforgivables that he could have used. Now this opened up more avenues for him in the castle, but also if Death came knocking again he would be prepared to avoid its morbid curiosity of him.

Chapter 15

Chapter Notes

> Thank you all for your lovely comments and sorry I have not managed to reply! I wanted to get stuck into this as things start to shift from now, so get ready!

“Welcome all, to our post-Yule feast, to welcome you all back for our next term at Hogwarts,” Dippet began. “May I offer congratulations to four of our students who have come-of-age over the holidays, and progress to adulthood in the Wizarding World. Olive Hornby from Hufflepuff, Margot Droope from Ravenclaw, and from Slytherin Thomas Riddle and Hadrian Peverell.”

There was a restrained round of applause.

“However, a few of us have taken the decision to not return for the rest of this academic year, due to the rising situation across Europe. The Ackers and Huxleys have both suffered losses in their families, and we must think about them and support them during this time.”

Hadrian shifted. Grindelwald and Hitler, what a combination. Both the Wizarding and Muggle world terrorised by megalomaniacs.

“It is a very sombre time, but know that in these walls, myself and your Professors will always have your safety as our priority. Please, let the feast begin, and converse with your peers. We need to be with each other at this time.” Dippet bowed his head and retreated to the top table, prompting the food to appear at the tables.

Hadrian turned to look at his friends. Abraxas was directly opposite him and everyone was there apart from Cassius.

“You did not tell us you were coming-of-age, Hadrian,” the Malfoy said smoothly, blue eyes flashing over him. “It is tradition to have gifts from family and friends.”

He shrugged, his cheeks tinging with colour. “It really is no big deal.”

“It is a massive deal,” Lestrange cried out, before biting into a carving of beef.

“So, when was it?” Abraxas asked.

“The thirty-first.” Hadrian placed some potatoes on his plate, but his eyes rose at the silence that followed.

Dolohov however, had not read the room. He grinned. “The same as Tom.”

Hadrian’s jaw locked, his fork hovering over his plate. No wonder why Dippet had seemed taken aback. The Headmaster could have said something. He could not help but look over at Riddle, who was seated next to Abraxas - pretty much in the centre of the group of boys. Those cinnamon eyes caught his and held for a long moment. It was bizarre, but the emptiness Hadrian had felt over the past two weeks seemed less cavernous ever since they had all sat down for dinner. His magic seemed a bit more placated.

Surprisingly, it was Riddle that broke the silence. “Professor Slughorn will want to meet with us, to talk through expectations in adulthood.”

Hadrian gave a stiff nod, playing with his food with his fork. “Where is Cassius anyway?”

Once more, a silence fell over them before Abraxas cleared his throat. “He was not feeling well.”

The rest of the meal went well. Most of them discussed what they had done over Yule, with the Malfoy’s having held a party with a multitude of respected guests that all of them had attended. Riddle remained silent, as per usual, but everyone else was in good spirits. Silas had even engaged Hadrian in a conversation about Quidditch and he inwardly thanked Hermione for gifting him *Quidditch Teams of Britain and Ireland* , which had given detailed reports of the history of each team. Many hours upon hours he had spent with Ron pouring over the pages and quizzing each other instead of doing the essays they had been set.

Hadrian had left dinner earlier than most. Onyx had been hunting and he had agreed to meet him near the Slytherin common room so that Riddle did not intercept his companion before he did.

As he strode down the corridor towards the entrance to the dungeons, he thought about the other Slytherin. This was the period in which he had no idea when and where Riddle was starting to construct more horcruxes and that worried him more than anything. At a stretch there were two - the diary and the ring. Riddle still seemed relatively sane, but what really lay behind closed doors?

He ventured down to the entrance of the common room, casting a fond look at Onyx, who slithered right over to him. Hadrian bent down, picking up his black companion and placing the snake onto his shoulder where he liked to be.

"*I met with Una today, ssshe wasss very happy to be having her Massster back.*"

"*Una? That isss her name?*" He tried not to wince at the idea of such a feminine name for a massive basilisk. From the Chamber of Secrets, during his Second Year, he still remembered the fierce heat of the fang as it punctured his shoulder, the poison dripping into his body. And the smell. The smell of decay and something...primal.

They entered the common room, which was empty as everyone was still at the feast.

"*Yesss, ssshe isss ssso pretty. I told her that ssshe can meet you.*"

"*Onyx, I am not sssure I want that jussst yet.*" He stroked the smooth scales of his companion. "*I may have a job for you.*"

A black tongue flicked out. "*Yesss, Massster*?"

"*I want you to ssspend time with the other Ssspeaker - Una'sss Massster. I want you to tell me what he readsss, what he ssspeaks to Una about...anything.*"

"Hadrian?"

Hadrian's head snapped up, seeing Cassius standing in the doorway that led to the rooms. His friend's face was paler than usual and there were small smudges under his eyes. Those blue eyes looked at him with a mix of curiosity and something else.

"Cassius? Are you feeling alright?" At the silence that followed, Hadrian shifted awkwardly. "Abraxas said you were ill."

"Were you just speaking to your snake?"

Hadrian shoved a hand through his unruly tresses. "Yes."

"You are a Parselmouth? Like Tom?"

He pulled a face at the comparison. "I am a Parselmouth, yes."

Cassius blinked before a shadow of a smile touched his lips. "Of course

you are. Are they all up at dinner still? It is very early."

Hadrian nodded.

"Do you want to take a walk? I could do with the air." Cassius was already moving towards the door. "I was just about to take one."

"Let me grab my cloak." Hadrian darted into their common room, strangely glad to see everyone's belongings back at their bedsides. His eyes lingered on the floating, spiralling snake on Riddle's dresser. Onyx wanted to come with him, so he cast a warming spell on his cloak pocket before putting it on. His snake slithered down, letting out a contented hiss.

Returning to Cassius, they left the common room and headed up to the main building. There were drips and drabs of students filing out of the Main Hall. Cassius inclined his head to the doors that led to outside.

"How was your holiday?" Avery asked, voice a little hoarse.

"Uneventful." Hadrian fingered his wand in his pocket, the memory of his grandfather's blue eyes transforming with a milky hue flickering through his mind.

"Hogwarts is boring without anyone else. In First Year, my parents had an engagement in Europe over Yule, and only some random Seventh Year Slytherin was left. She did not speak to me at all." Cassius gave a throaty chuckle. "It was a very lonely holiday."

They continued down the pathway, before the blonde boy started to detour, heading in the direction of the Herbology greenhouses. Their shoes crunched on the compacted snow - layers and layers of snow after the last few days' deluge. There was a frost already in the air, and their warm breath came out in small puffs.

"What about your holiday?"

Cassius buried his hands in his robes. "It was...uneventful."

"Were you sick most of it?"

"I don't really want to talk about it." Cassius sighed at the harsh tone in his voice. "Sorry, I just…"

"It is fine." Hadrian offered him a smile. "Besides, you are back here,

at Hogwarts, surrounded by friends. Also, you also owe me a few games on the quidditch training field. I hope you have been practising."

They approached the greenhouses, where the plant life was visible against the glass - a burst of vivid green and a dash of red. There was nobody out here, and the silence was vast. It felt like time itself was holding its breath.

"Actually, there was something else I was looking forward to more," Cassius said quietly.

Hadrian gasped as a hand bunched into his shirt, cool glass suddenly pressing in through his robes to the skin on his back. He shuddered at the strange sensation before his lips were seized in a fierce kiss. It was nothing like their first one. The first one was full of trepidation and innocence. This...was something different. Cassius deepened the kiss almost immediately, his other hand sliding down to grip Hadrian's hip.

Moaning at the onslaught of feeling, Hadrian allowed his tongue to battle against Cassius' but a quick nip to his bottom lip soon made him retreat to submission. That hand on his hip tightened, before yanking their bodies together. Hadrian's hands could only take the other boy's robes, anchoring him in place.

His nerves were on fire but something was not quite right. There was a desperation to Cassius' actions that made his thought process return with a jolt. That emptiness he felt constantly in his very soul made its return, causing him to withdraw from the kiss.

Hadrian pulled away a bit more, just as Cassius leaned forward to try and kiss him again. He gave an apologetic smile at the hurt look the other Slytherin gave him. "Sorry Cassius...are you okay?"

Avery's upper lip trembled before he spun around and turned his back on him. "Let's just head inside."

"Cass-"

"Hadrian."

He stood, dumbfounded as, in a flurry of robes, Cassius strode back to the castle - alone. Left standing in the cold, lips aching from the heated kiss, Hadrian shook his head. This was why relationships were just bad news. Having to predict other people's emotions and thoughts

was exhausting. That was proven with Cho.

What had gotten Cassius, who was usually so placid, in that state?

After a few minutes of allowing his brain to settle, Hadrian returned to the castle, ready to just speak to people again after weeks of hardly any human interaction.

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“Hadrian.”

He stopped in the corridor, seeing Avery walking hastily towards him. Some blonde locks were free over his forehead, giving him a youthful look. Those circles under his eyes, however, were darker.

“Hadrian, I want to apologise for last night,” Cassius said quietly, looking around to check whether they were still alone. “Can I make it up to you?”

Hadrian raised a dark eyebrow. “What about telling me what is up?”

Cassius gave his lop-sided smile, a finger coming up to scratch his jaw. “I just had a rough Yule with the parents. I should not have let it affect us. I am sorry.”

Emerald eyes studied him before giving a slight shrug of one shoulder. “Then, it is all fine.” He turned. “Shall we head to class?” He started to walk, hearing the other boy follow.

Slughorn beamed as the Slytherins and Ravenclaws filed into his classroom, returning to their self-allocated seats. He even released a chuckle at some point - about what, was anyone’s guess - and patted his sizeable waist.

“Welcome back, Sixth Years,” he began. “Today, we resume our brewing - with *Amortentia* as our first Potion. Who can tell me what *Amortentia* is?” His small eyes fell onto Riddle. “Ah, yes, Tom.”

Riddle was sat in the centre of all of the Slytherin boys. His back straightened. “ *Amortentia* , Professor, is the most powerful love potion in the world. Although, no potion can actually construct love, rather the guise of it through infatuation or obsession. Its smell is different to

each person, containing the unique smells of what they find attractive or love the most."

Slughorn clapped his hands together. "Perfect, Tom, as usual. Yes, yes...rightly said to be the most dangerous potion in existence."

Hadrian raised his hand.

"Mr Peverell?"

He shifted on his stool, giving a quick glance to Riddle. "Sir, say the potion was used on a person and a child was conceived under the influence. Would that have some effect on the child itself?" Hadrian felt the magic of Riddle rise in reaction to the question, dark and intense. He had to restrain his own magic from trying to react.

"Hmm, what an interesting question, Hadrian. There is no documented evidence of any such influence, but there have been many who do not even realise they have been given the potion, especially if administered for their lifetime. So tracking and tracing such children would be difficult. But what an interesting idea." Slughorn smiled, his ruddy cheeks darkening with joy. "Twenty points to Slytherin for both Tom and Hadrian's thoughtful contributions."

But Riddle's hand rose once more.

"Yes, Tom?"

"Surely, if some people can throw off the Imperius curse, Professor, then some can throw off the effects of *Amortentia* ?"

Slughorn chuckled. "Do not be too naive Tom. Whilst the Imperius is one of the most dangerous curses, it is solely driven by the caster's wishes, making the victim a puppet. With this potion, it strips away the idea of consent where we are most vulnerable - our need to be loved. The reason this cannot be just 'thrown off' is that we often underestimate the power of obsession. Unlike substandard love potions, *Amortentia* is by far the most potent, because of the ability for the victim to still feel normal, the only change being feelings for someone else." He paused. "Now, if we move onto the smelling-" Slughorn stopped again. "Hadrian?" His voice was slightly more exasperated.

"Sorry Sir," Hadrian began. "Do we learn how to cast the Unforgivables here at Hogwarts?"

A look of horror crossed over the Professor's face. "W-whatever - no, of course not," he spluttered.

"Then why are a bunch of Sixth Years learning to brew a potion that could force someone into a relationship against their will? Could that not lead to rape and abuse? If this is worse than the *Imperius*, then I don't understand why we have to brew it, if the school forbids the Unforgivables."

Silence invaded the classroom.

Hadrian's mind was whirring. Obviously, Dumbledore had spoken in detail about Merope Gaunt's use of love potion on Tom Riddle Senior, but he had never actually given thought on what that actually meant. It was as if his mind had been a closed book in the future. Here, everything seemed open for him to explore, without anyone else 'guiding' him, and Hadrian was surprisingly eager to challenge. But that led to its own problems.

Riddle had been abandoned by his mother, who was distraught with the rejection of her drugged lover, on some orphanage's doorstep. A child not just born from a loveless relationship, not just a product of *Amortentia*...but also a child of rape.

"I believe you raise interesting questions, Mr Peverell, that perhaps as a school we need to reflect on," Slughorn replied eventually. "However, my job is to prepare you for your NEWT examinations and this is on the list of potions you could be asked to brew."

Hadrian just nodded his head, but he was scribbling away next to the Half Blood Prince's notations about the danger of the potion and to chase up whether the potion had any lasting impact on children born from the influence.

"Right, I am going to call you up one by one, and I would like you to make note of what you smell." Slughorn paced at the front of the classroom. "This will also be a sign for the future, if you are unlucky enough to have such an...admirer. You will know what it smells like for you."

Hadrian once more scribbled: *But can the smell change over time?*

Each student was called up in turn. Green eyes rose as Riddle was called over. The boy strode up to the front, bending down very slightly to breathe in the fumes. His lips tightened before he rose and swiftly marched back to his chair.

Next was Hadrian. He bent over the cauldron. *Treacle tart…broomsticks…and something different, perhaps something floral mixed with something dark…like rich spices…*

Returning to his desk, he froze when he realised what that last smell was. It had been in the library. Riddle had approached him with that stupid parchment.

There was no way he was attracted to Tom Riddle. No way. He stabbed his quill into his parchment, releasing an agitated hiss.

The lesson went without a hitch. Hadrian focused on the instructions in the Prince's journal. Slughorn was more than happy with his finished product.

At the end of the lesson, the Professor asked Riddle and Hadrian to stay behind. Both of them had a free period next; Slughorn had already checked. The large man sat behind his desk, popping small nuggets of chocolate into his mouth.

"So, boys, Headmaster Dippet requires all Heads of Houses to have a conversation with all students that turn of age in the Sixth Year. I know both of you are very clever and mature young men, who have shown inquisitiveness not only in lessons but also in our career meetings." He smiled at them both. "You both do not require adult permission to attend Hogsmeade, although before now, Tom I have acted as your guardian and Dippet yours, Hadrian."

He had not known that. Hadrian, however, nodded as if he had.

"We require that although you are of legal age in the Wizarding World, to not drink alcohol during term, so we can ensure a good example is set to younger years. Both of you can apply for Apparition licenses whenever you are ready, but in a month's time, the Ministry will resume lessons for all Sixth years. Lastly, the trace has gone from your wands, so you will be able to perform magic outside of Hogwarts." He studied both of them. "Do you have any questions?"

There was silence.

"Oh, and Professor Dippet has specifically asked me to inform you both, as the only orphans in Sixth Year, that if you so wish, Hogwarts will be open to you both this Summer."

Hadrian felt his eyes widen and barely managed to stop his jaw from falling. *That bastard* . To include Riddle staying over Summer also,

without even telling him first? His fist tightened on the top of his potion's station.

"Thank you, Sir." There was a delighted edge to Riddle's voice that he had never heard before.

"Perfect, now both of you hurry along." He popped another chocolate drop in his mouth.

Hadrian stood, gathering his books before striding from the room.

"Hadrian."

He stopped, drawing in a breath before turning in the dimly, lit corridor to see Riddle walking over. The other boy dripped with confidence, his books held lightly in his hand by his side, robes swishing around his slim figure.

"Yes?" His magic gave an interested twitch but he reigned it in with as much energy as he could muster.

Riddle smiled, his eyes gleaming. "I just wanted to invite you to our next gathering. We are making preparations for Imbolc." Onyx slithered out of the Slytherin's pocket and up to Tom's broad shoulder.

Hadrian kept his face passive, although he was glad that Onyx was keeping a close eye on Una's 'Master'. "What is Imbolc?"

The smile grew. "It marks the true beginning of Spring - a ritual to help fertility. We thought it might help Cassius." He started to walk past Hadrian. "Think about it?" Onyx flicked his tongue out.

A deep, spicy scent plundered Hadrian's senses as Riddle walked off. Help Cassius? Hadrian stood there for a long moment. He eventually shoved a hand through his hair and whisked off to get some air.

Chapter 16

Chapter Notes

So, I loved writing this chapter and I hope you all love reading it! It is...different.

Again, thank you so much for the comments and I am going to try and reply to the next set. They really are spurring me on!

Upon the broken shelves, lay all sorts of trinkets: plastic soldiers in various states of mutilation, arms legs or even heads missing; a few broken View-Master wheels that had stills from Star Trek if one held it up to the swaying lightbulb; three mashed up Micro Machines, one being a lorry with its cab half-bent in from when Dudley had taken a knife to it; and many random bits of Lego that Harry had fashioned into creative statues.

Dust cascaded through the cracks as the staircase above shook, as if King Kong himself was descending. Harry's lips curved into a smile at the thought - Dudley's body sprouting thick black hair and climbing to the top of the Empire State Building. It wouldn't be much of a change. Dudley and his best friend Piers Polkiss liked to swing from the monkey bars in the playground before 'accidentally' landing on some poor, unsuspecting Year Three kids who often gathered there to play Duck Duck Goose.

In his grubby fingers, Harry played with his favourite toy soldier. This one was mostly intact, but had no face. Dudley had cut it off with Uncle Vernon's razor blade. Afterwards, he had cried when it did not repair itself and thrown it down the stairs.

Dirt was still caked under his fingernails from gardening all day, planting his Aunt's new rose bushes. Sometimes the thorns had pricked him, but for some reason there were no evidence of cuts.

"Where is that little freak?"

Harry winced at the high-pitched, nasal voice that erupted from the kitchen. He sighed, placing his figure back on the shelf next to where his head would lay at night. Often, he hoped that the faceless soldier would protect him when he was sleeping.

"Boy!"

He opened the cupboard door and clambered out. "Yes, Aunt Petunia?"

His Aunt emerged from the kitchen, an apron tied around her waist as she peered down her needle-point nose at the seven-year-old. "You little nitwit, have you forgotten the time?"

Harry worried his bottom lip through his teeth. "There isn't a clock in my cupboard, Aunt Petunia."

A meaty hand collided with the side of his head. Harry released a gasp of pain, tears

bursting from his eyes as his skull throbbed. Vernon stood behind him, remote control in his other hand. "How dare you answer back to your Aunt?" the large man scowled. "We put a roof over your head, a bed to sleep in and this is how you repay us?"

"Sorry, Uncle Vernon."

"Go and start our dinner...and don't forget to wash that filth off your hands."

Harry scurried into the kitchen, narrowly avoiding another swat to the head by his Aunt. He stood on tiptoes and ran the water, spending as long as he could with the warm water and soup. His least favourite job was the washing up, as he was not tall enough to properly reach, and his back always started to hurt after the first two or three minutes.

Forty five minutes later, dinner was served to the Dursleys. However, because it was Dudders favourite meal - lasagna - there was no portion left for him at the end. Harry's stomach was painfully tight from the lack of food, especially after all the gardening and cooking he had done today.

He buttered some bread and managed to scrape some of the leftover cheese he had grated, onto his plate. As every day, he then took himself into his cupboard where he began eating his meal with the door open. Vernon demanded he leave it open, so he could see if Harry had stolen any food he should not have.

"What is this?"

His head snapped up. There was someone standing in the doorway but Harry could not see his head or shoulders - just some dark clothing. Harry stayed silent, bread halfway to his mouth.

The person bent down. It was an older boy with pale skin, brown eyes and curly hair over his forehead.

“Boy! Clear up!”

At the booming voice of his Uncle, Harry scrambled up, looking at the dark-haired boy desperately. “I need to clean the dishes.” His food was discarded on his plate on his mattress. “I don’t know who you are, but if they find you, you will be in trouble. Please, move out of my way.”

A quizzical expression crossed the boy’s face before he stepped aside, allowing the small child to race into the dining room. Vernon roared with laughter at his usual after-dinner show in the living room.

Harry took all of the plates, which were scraped clean - just smeared with the red remnants of the meal. He took it over to the kitchen, switching on the light and running the hot water.

The older boy stood there in the doorway, just watching, his side resting on the frame. “What are you doing?”

Harry gave him an exasperated look. “If you aren’t going away, I must be seeing things.” He pressed his fingers against the back of his head, wincing. “Uncle must have hit more freakishness in me.” He pushed his fringe away from his forehead, rubbing his tingling scar.

“Hadrian?”

The seven-year-old frowned. “Harry.” He stopped the tap, looking at the bowl crowned with bubbles. He began to lower the plates in first, saving the pans until later.

Meanwhile, the boy had moved and was inspecting the kitchen. “What is this?”

Harry sighed. “It’s a washing machine...yes, that’s cereal...and a sandwich maker.” He resumed washing the plates, surprised that none of his family had said anything about his talking.

There was a long silence as Harry finished the plates and started to carry the saucepans over.

“What is the year?” came the quiet question.

“1987.”

“When were you born, Harry?”

He gave a disgruntled sound of pain as his lower back started to throb from the weight of the saucepan and balancing on his tip-toes. “I am seven years

old...so probably 1980."

"When did you get that scar on your forehead? It looks painful."

Harry shrugged his little shoulders. "When my parents probably died in the car crash, yeah I think that's what my Aunt said."

"Were your parents Muggles?"

"Muggles?" Harry cried out as a pain shot through his scar. Seven. Years. Old. Something not...right. Seventeen?

"What is this place, Harry?" The boy had stepped closer, his voice low and smooth.

"Can you just go away?" Harry scrubbed at the pot, his eyes heating up with tears as the bottom of the saucepan wouldn't budge with the caked on lasagna sauce.

"What is this place, Harry?" came the repeated question, more insistent this time.

"I live here," Harry grumbled.

"Your Aunt and Uncle? They make you garden...cook dinner for them...clean up after them...feed you bread and crumbs?" A hand touched the back of Harry's head. "Is this the true Hadrian Peverell?"

At the name, everything ground to a halt. Harry froze. Emerald eyes widened before his magic exploded out of him. He screamed, throwing his shields up and forced himself out .

Hadrian came too with a scream. Sweat covered his body, the sheets wrapped around his legs as if they were hands holding him down. His heart thundered; the beat a viscous drum in his ears. He lurched out of his bed, so glad for the silencing charm on his bed.

He was going to throw up.

It was a race to throw open the curtains and stumble out of bed, trying not to wake anyone up. Hadrian got to the bathroom, leaning against the wall as he dry-heaved into the toilet.

He felt him. The dark, magnetic magic filling every corner of the bathroom. "I tried to tell you before...Riddle. Fuck. Off." Hadrian rose, wiping his mouth with a trembling hand.

Tom Riddle even looked fucking elegant in his pyjamas, only his hair a little ruffled with sleep as he stood there, just watching him.

Hadrian walked over to the tap, splashing his face and gargling water. Riddle's silence was unnerving him further.

"You forgot your wand."

To his horror, his holly wand dangled between Riddle's fingers. "Riddle," he growled, eyes flashing.

"Hadrian...or should that be Harry?" purred the silky voice. "I think it is time you finally tell me what is happening. Though, by now, I have a pretty good guess." He took a step closer.

Hadrian backed off, his nerves rattled and eyes wide open at the other boy's words. "No." He shook his head. "No, that was just a dream."

"Who are you trying to convince?" Another step.

Hadrian stood his ground, although everything was screaming at him not to. But he knew there was nowhere to go behind him, and he needed to show strength despite not feeling any of it.

"Harry. Harry who 'dreams' of the future. A future where he is hidden away in a cupboard. A *freak* ."

His fists clenched by his sides but he refused to look away from those cinnamon eyes, which seemed to glow in the dark bathroom - lit only by a few candles hovering overhead.

"Where *Muggles* abuse him." Riddle spat out the word. "A little boy who cooks, cleans and hides away to eat his pieces of bread."

Hadrian trembled - with anger, shame or fear he did not know. Maybe all three. His head felt like it was splitting into two.

"Tell me the *truth* ," Riddle hissed, only a couple of steps away now.

Hadrian's lips curled up into a sneer. "Why should I Riddle? Have you told all of your friends who you are?" He took a step forward, his sneer deepening. "Have you told them how you have massacred your family? Have you told them how you have split your *fucking* soul?" He threw back his head and released the laughter bubbling inside him, at the aghast expression on that handsome face. "You want honesty, *Voldemort*? It goes both ways." He snatched his wand from Riddle's

hand, stomping back to the dormitory.

Throwing himself back on his bed, he cast the strongest protections he knew on the drawn curtains and released a scream. His fingers dug into his aching skull.

What had he done?

***

Going through the motions of the day had been difficult. Hadrian had not managed to get back to sleep after the incident with Riddle, his headache worsening and the sickness in his stomach actually causing him to vomit.

It was in Herbology that he had thrown up outside after quickly excusing himself. Cassius had taken him to the Hospital Wing, where Healer Roberts had taken him to a bed and given him some pain relief. Despite that, his head still throbbed and his scar burned.

A thumb brushed over Hadrian's knuckles.

He turned his head, taking in Cassius who had drawn up a chair to sit next to him. When Healer Roberts had tried to shoo the blonde boy back to class, Cassius had persuaded the medic that he would monitor Hadrian. It was luck that Hadrian had thrown up again just at that moment and could not protest.

"How are you feeling?"

Hadrian took a glass of water with his other hand, sipping it before cradling it against his temple. "Rough," he answered, his voice hoarse.

He did not meet the other Slytherin's eyes. It was the pain mixing with Riddle's strange comments about Imbolc that made him cautious. Cassius was not being honest with him, and well, that was the theme at the moment. Hadrian pulled his hand free from his friend's.

The Healer started to make his way over. "Hadrian, your temperature is high but there is nothing that seems infected or should be causing you pain."

Emerald eyes closed.

“I would like to keep you in to monitor you.”

Hadrian was silent, each pulse of his heart sending electrical shockwaves zapping through his nerves. He felt a warm hand take the glass from his temple before a cold compress was applied to his forehead, although it paused before it was properly applied.

“I also want to investigate your scar…it is red and inflamed. Highly unusual. Can I ask how the pain relievers are working?

“Hurts to…talk and think.”

Healer Roberts hummed. There was a tinkling of glass before a vial was pressed against his lips and a sweeter potion was eased into his mouth.

He swallowed, and then he heard the Healer walking away.

For minutes…hours, Hadrian dozed as the stronger pain relievers started to take its effect. His mind moved through the scenes from last night…emotionless as the medicine dulled his senses.

“Cassius.”

“My Lord.”

“Leave us.”

“But-”

Hadrian’s eyes were too heavy to open, just moving his head to the direction of the voices.

“Are you questioning me, Avery?” came a hissed response. “You would not want your family to hear of your…attachment to Hadrian, would you?”

There was the sound of a chair scraping on the floor before a hush of whispers that he could not make out. All he felt was the softness of the pillow and the gentle throb in his head as time blurred again. Hadrian gathered the sheets in his hands, burrowing deeper into its embrace.

Something brushed his forehead, and the pain started to dissipate underneath the medicine. He arched up a little, a moan falling from his lips.

“This connects us.” The cool finger traced the lightning bolt. “Hadrian?”

Hadrian floated in and out of consciousness. The pain was all gone but the grasp of the medicine prevented him from coming fully out of the haze he was under. He hummed, to show he could hear.

“I can even feel how this stops the pain you are obviously in. Was it our shared dream?”

His teeth sunk into his lower lip, trying to fall back into sleep rather than listen to Riddle’s too smooth and too silky voice.

“I want to talk...soon. Not yet, but soon.” Another brush against his scar, before Riddle’s presence disappeared.

***

Hadrian rubbed his eyes as he made his way through the castle. It was quiet, with students mostly back to their common rooms after dinner. Walking like this, caused him to forget that he had travelled back in time.

For whatever reason, he had ended up on top of the West Tower. It was freezing and he was poorly dressed, having left the Hospital Wing just in his robes he had entered in.

Healer Roberts had put him on a ban from strenuous magic. During the ‘further tests’ the man had conducted, he had found that his magic was acting erratically with no reason the man could pinpoint. There had been tests on his scar - and there was something - but again Healer Roberts could not make it out, just that the man felt uncomfortable trying to study it.

He leant on the railings, looking over the side of the tower to the dark abyss below. His emotions were all over the place. They had been since he had awoken today after lunch. There had been no dreams, nothing, in the twenty-four hours he had slept for. Riddle had been there. The other boy had eased his pain for some odd reason.

In the future, this would be the location Hermione and Harry would fly Buckbeak up here, with a rescued Sirius in tow. Another farewell to his recently found Godfather, the same Godfather that would fall to his cousin’s wand a few years later. However, it may not be the ‘new’

future now. In fact, it was not the future now; Hadrian would make sure of it.

His fingers brushed over his scar, which did not tingle or hurt but he remembered the cool digits of Riddle's exploring the mark.

Up here, Sirius would make a comment that Harry was 'definitely his father's son' but now, more than ever, he was far from it. He had cast a bloody *Imperio* at his grandfather, had tried to hit Bellatrix with a *Crucio* ...the only one he was missing from his collection was *Avada Kadavra.* He'd stolen a Hallow and seemed to have joined Riddle's group. It was damning. It was damning that standing up here, reminiscing, he had no guilt whatsoever.

Hadrian turned his back on the tower after another long few minutes. It was cold and the first few flakes of snow were falling from the sky.

He descended into the castle, heading straight down to the common room. As it was Wednesday, a lot of the younger students had their elective subjects after dinner.

There was something going on in the common room, he could hear the laughter as he approached the entrance.

It was some kind of celebration.

His friends were gathered in their usual corner, but the Sixth year girls had joined and a spattering of the Seventh years also. Apart from that, the rest of the room was empty.

"Hadrian!" Adelia Greengrass jumped to her feet and rushed over. A grin was plastered over her pretty face, blonde hair pulled up in a loose ponytail. "How are you feeling?"

He half smiled, half grimaced. "Recovering."

"Hadrian, we saved you a space."

Freezing at the voice, emerald eyes wandered to Riddle, who sat on a wing-backed leather chair. That mouth of his was curved into a mocking smile as his hand gestured to the floor at his feet.

"I should probably head to bed," he answered through gritted teeth.

"And miss the celebrations? You don't want to be rude, do you?" asked Riddle, silkily.

Greengrass pulled him over to the group and Druella shifted so Hadrian could fit between her and Adelia on the snug sofa. A glass of something was thrust into his hand. He did not like being this close to people, with their thighs pressed against his, enclosing him in like his cupboard. Hadrian ignored Riddle's gaze.

"What are we celebrating?" he murmured, sniffing the glass to note the scent of alcohol.

"Cassius' engagement, of course," Adelia said, jolting her shoulder into his.

Hadrian's head snapped up. Cassius saw in a small armchair, staring down at the floor as if he wanted it to swallow him.

"Mother sent us some elf-made wine to celebrate, as the Pure-blood fashion," Druella explained.

But Hadrian wasn't listening. He schooled his face into a neutral expression, raising his glass. "Congratulations, Avery," he said, voice cutting across the distance between them.

"Yes, congratulations," Riddle echoed. "We shall celebrate Imbolc with you and your betrothed in mind. Maybe you have many healthy, and powerful children in your line."

Cassius gave a weak smile, nodding his head to Riddle.

Everyone raised their glass - Hadrian included - and echoed Riddle's statement. Hadrian tipped the alcohol back, enjoying the kiss of fire that chased down his throat. It was after that his eyes connected with Avery's. There was hurt and sorrow in those blue eyes.

It was after a short while that Hadrian made his excuses and went into his dormitory. Although he had gotten plenty of sleep, it had been medically induced and he still felt the need to sleep off the remnants of the headache and sickness. He pulled off his robes, discarding them to be cleaned and rubbed his scar.

"Hadrian?"

He did not turn, or reply.

A hand took his arm lightly, warm fingers pressing in through the fabric of his shirt. "I am so sorry."

“Sorry? You had days to tell me. What was this?” Hadrian spat out, pulling his arm free and making distance between them.

Cassius sighed. “I have a responsibility to my family.”

“So what was I? Fun?”

“No!” came the exclamation. “I really like you, Hadrian. We could still be together.”

Hadrian released an empty laugh. “You are betrothed?”

Cassius ran a hand through his blonde hair. “It is quite common for men to have relationships with other men outside the marriage.”

“Like some dirty secret?” Hadrian shook his head. “Look, Cassius, I don’t blame you for my naivety here. I will still be your friend, but I won’t be a second choice.” He rubbed a hand over his face. “I need some space, and sleep.” He shed his shirt and trousers, ignoring the other boy as he got into bed. The image of Cassius - bottom lip stuck between his teeth and eyes downcast - was seared into his mind as he spelled his curtains closed and buried himself in the duvet.

Chapter 17

Chapter Notes

> Having a bit of a stressful time, but thought I would upload this! My next update may be a little more delayed.
>
> And yes, Dumbledore is Half Blood in canon.Both of his parents were wizards, but his mother Kendra Dumbledore was a Muggle-born, making him a Half-blood.

Gathered in the silvery folds of his Invisibility Cloak, Hadrian walked through the corridor on the second floor. It was after breakfast and he had made a swift exit from his group of friends, Onyx having informed him that Riddle was making his way down to see Una.

His heart beat against his rib cage as he entered the familiar bathroom. It was less wrecked than it was in the future, but the resident ghost was present. Hadrian stopped in the middle, near the sinks but watched Moaning Myrtle as she sat upon the top of one of the stalls. The girl sobbed, shimmering tears falling onto the floor and disappearing.

It was different now. In this reality, Myrtle Warren had been dead for under a year. Her schoolmates were still alive and attended the very school her ghost haunted. Hadrian knew little of the girl, in reality.

He turned his back on her, hissing out ‘ *Open* ’ to the tap where the small serpent was engraved. Onyx wriggled on his shoulder in excitement, hissing about seeing ‘beautiful’ Una again.

Myrtle screamed as the taps started to move. A large splashing noise told him that she had gone down some toilet bend in fright.

Hadrian descended, ordering it to close after him. It was damp, the stone work shining as he descended the many stairs into the depths of the Chamber. He daren’t light his wand, as not to reward Riddle with the knowledge of his presence. When he was down into one of the corridors, he found himself surprised by how clean it was. The stone underfoot was shiny - not with moisture, but was polished in that way.

He followed the corridor down, which was light dimly by candles just above head height along near the ceiling. It had a scent that he could

not put his finger on, but that it smelt old. Not decaying, old...but like pages of an old book.

"*Almost there!*" Onyx hissed.

Hadrian rolled his eyes. "*Be quiet.*" He strode forward and entered one of the main walkways into the heart of the Chamber of Secrets. It was a vast platform, with pillars either side, embedded into a body of water. Each pillar had a snake wrapped around it, mouths open and water cascading out as a pleasant sound that would mask his footsteps.

There was a slight green hue to the stonework that he had never noticed before. Then again, the last time he was down here, he was desperately trying to find Ginny before it was too late.

It was beautiful, there was no doubt about that.

As he walked into the main body of the Chamber, he marvelled at the huge and very hideous statue of Salazar Slytherin. The man's money-like face was massive, eyes staring off into the distance as if he knew that his teachings would be gospel to those in the future. And just what were those? Pureblood supremacy? Death to all Muggleborns?

There was no sign of 'Una' or Riddle.

He took in the view of the cavernous chamber made from one of the Founders. Had Riddle cleaned it? It looked less dusty and decrepit than it did in the future. Or was it also magically aware, like the Room of Requirement, and aware its Heir was in the castle? The green glow was here also, emanating from the floor - perhaps under the flooring itself. He found himself peering down at it, trying to see if there was some kind of light buried under there...but nothing. Just some odd grooves.

One of his hands came to stroke Onyx who complained at the jostling. Hadrian moved over to the openings either side of Salazar Slytherin's feet - two tunnels. He took the left hand side instinctually.

The tunnel was curved, with parselscript adorning the top in emerald tiling. It was some kind of large protective spell. Hadrian found himself pausing more than once, wondering how long Slytherin had spent creating these spells in a language only a fair few would ever know. Could Hadrian cast any normal spell in Parseltongue? What effect would it have?

There was a strange gap up ahead in the tunnel that was noted by two burning sconces. He had never seen it before, but in the past he had been running away from the big snake who wanted to kill him. It was a winding, stone staircase.

Ascending, he noted the presence of Riddle before he saw him. He shuddered at the other boy's magic, restraining his own from reaching out.

However, when he emerged, it was not Riddle who drew his attention. It was the extensive *library* that greeted him. A flicker of excitement started to burn in his gut before he caught himself. Was he getting excited about a *library* ? Hermione would be insanely proud. Riddle sat at a circular, dark oak table that filled a good portion of the lower floor. His head was bowed, quill scribbling away on some parchment as his right finger skimmed through the thin book open in front of him.

Hadrian poured over the titles, glad he had silenced his feet as he moved up and down small stone staircases. It was in a semi-circle formation, bookcases and piles of books everywhere. When he turned around to look down at Riddle, his breath caught at the sight. There was a large window looking down into the Chamber where Salazar Slytherin's statue stood, and he saw the intricately carved ritual circle in the centre of the vast room. As it was so large, no wonder why he had not spotted it whilst walking through. They would just look like random grooves.

"Are you just going to stand there, *Harry* ?" Riddle said, sounding a bit exasperated.

Hadrian jumped at the voice, eliciting an irritated sound from Onyx who slithered down his body and out of the cloak. Sighing, he pulled it off, revealing himself to the Slytherin who was looking up at him. "How did you know?"

He frowned at the idea he had been identified, and for the first time made him doubt that the cloak was a powerful Hallow.

Riddle arched a brow, placing down his quill. "Your magic was quite the giveaway." He paused. "You did not have that Invisibility Cloak when you first arrived here at Hogwarts."

Hadrian started. "You went through my belongings?"

The other boy just shrugged.

“Why does it even surprise me?”

Riddle closed the book he had been reading. “The most interesting item was your Advanced Potion-Making book. Fourth Edition. The First Edition was only released two years ago. Interesting sub-notes and alterations. And a self-given, egotistical name: the Half Blood *Prince* .”

Hadrian released a soft snort. “Says the guy who rearranges his name into ‘I am *Lord* Voldemort’.” He gathered his cloak up in his hands and started to walk down to where Riddle sat.

There was a slight twitch to the side of Riddle’s mouth. “Have a seat. Do you prefer Harry or Hadrian?”

He stared at the Slytherin in suspicion before drawing a chair opposite. The table was big enough that it left a very sizeable distance between them. “Hadrian.”

“I have had a few days to really…think.” Those cinnamon eyes never looked once away from him. “You clearly know a lot about me, and about my future actions.” A pale finger tapped on the polished surface of the table. “It places me at a distinct disadvantage.”

Hadrian leant back in his chair, draping his cloak over the arm of the chair he sat on. “I want an Unbreakable Vow.” He enjoyed the surprise that flared in the other boy’s face. Riddle had thought it would be another game, Hadrian leaving breadcrumbs for him to follow - taunting him with the knowledge he had.

“No.”

It was Hadrian’s turn to feel the surprise etched in his face. “You don’t want to know?”

Riddle smiled, too many teeth. “Oh yes, I will know, but I want to know everything. I want to know you are telling the truth. There is no way I am going to make a vow that’s consequence is to strip us of our magic. It would be a waste…for the both of us.” He paused. “So, here is where we are at currently. You have information about me - highly important information. What is the deal you are proposing?”

Hadrian raised his chin. “I want you not to make any more horcruxes. I want you to back off all of your stupid Pureblood ideology, which is rich coming from a Half-blood like yourself.”

Tom spread his hand out on the table. “And that is not a deal I am willing to make. I am not swearing under oath to not create any further horcruxes when I have no reason to stop. Also, I do not think you quite get the ideology I am promoting. Once more, Hadrian, I am not making any deal to stop when I have no reason to. All these ‘reasons’ to stop…are your secrets you do not wish to give.”

Hadrian shook his head. “I am not telling you a single thing until I have securities.”

“Then,” hands spread out, “we find ourselves here.”

He sighed, rubbing his eyes. “Which is?”

“I have been searching Salazar Slytherin’s library to find a solution to our problem. You are to help.”

Hadrian wanted to groan. More books? More researching? He instead let his upper lip curl. “You want to *bore* me into speaking to you?”

“I can just rip your mind out here and now, leave your carcass for my serpent?”

“Why don’t you?”

Riddle stared at him for a long moment. “Again, it would be a waste. You could be an interesting…assistant.”

Hadrian shook his head once more. “You wish.”

Those eyes gleamed. “I propose we find something that will put us on more…equal ground.”

“An Unbreakable Vow is fine, and we can come up with reasonable parameters.” Hadrian released a heavy sigh.

“What if I promise something, and after you reveal your secrets…you doom me to my death or maybe worse? That will not do, *Hadrian* .” He pulled a book from a small pile, and pushed it across the table so it landed near the raven-haired boy. “So, we do this. Or we make our own.”

Hadrian clenched his jaw. Here he was, in the Chamber of Secrets, and what was supposed to be a trip to see what nefarious things Riddle was up to, ended up being a blood research fest with his arch nemesis. But it was the oddness of his time so far in the past that had

drawn him here. Here, Riddle seemed human, despite his two horcruxes and the ridiculous magical power he could harness. Hadrian would try his best to sway Riddle away from his goal…

Three hours later, Hadrian was struggling to keep his eyes open. He pushed the book away and rubbed his aching eyes. The parselscript was easy enough to read as it looked like English, but it was the dense 'Old English', the syntax of the sentences making them difficult at times to decipher. Not to say that it was not interesting. There were all sorts of Dark rituals linking to blood, most of them about how to curse someone but some were on the subject of vows. However, the consequences in blood rituals appeared to be worse than having your magic just stripped away leaving you a squib.

"How do you sit there for so long reading this old stuff?" Hadrian groaned, seeing the other boy just flicking through and making notes.

"Stamina."

He rolled his eyes. "Have you found anything?"

Riddle's mouth pulled taut. He carefully placed down his quill and looked at Hadrian. "Not yet. Have you?"

"I found out that blood rituals are awful, as well as blood bonds."

"They can have their uses."

Hadrian grimaced. "We are not draining corpses so we can have a conversation about the future."

"What a shame."

His grimace deepened. "Why are the Dark Arts so obssessed with blood?"

There was a tug to the side of Riddle's mouth. "Pleasure and pain are best when intertwined. Do you remember the *thrill* after casting your slicing spell on that boy ,and seeing the blood just gush out?"

Hadrian glared. "I didn't feel any *thrill*. I was scared he was dying."

"Liar."

"Pleasure and pain are two very different things."

There was a sudden gleam to Riddle's eyes that made Hadrian shift

uncomfortable. “Maybe that is something we should test.”

Hadrian’s eyes rolled again. “Yes, because I am just going to let you slice me open, so you can feel good about yourself.”

A sinister smile spread across the Heir of Slytherin’s full mouth. “Oh, you are too *innocent* .”

His cheeks flared at the hissed word, shooting a glare at Riddle. “I need a break.” He stood up, raising his arms and stretching his aching back from leaning over dusty books.

To his surprise, Riddle also rose from his chair. “Let me take you to Una. Onyx has been telling her all about you.”

Hadrian glanced at his cloak, not wanting to just leave it here after all the effort he went to secure it.

Riddle sighed. “Just leave it there. What do I want with an Invisibility Cloak?” He started to lead the way back down the staircase, out of the library.

Hadrian followed, leaving it. As long as Riddle just thought it was another Invisibility Cloak, it was fine. He descended the stairs into the tunnel and they both walked in silence back down to the main chamber. This time, he allowed his eyes to rove the floor, seeing the etchings of the ritual circle there.

“*Una, come*.”

There was a rumbling and a minute passed before the basilisk appeared out of the other, right-hand-side tunnel. Hadrian swallowed, seeing the large beast looking almost exactly like it did in the future. Its huge head had its eyelids shut, protecting both boys from its yellow, deathly stare. Black scales shone with an unearthly green glow from the chamber’s odd lighting. Its body was thick, and so huge that it towered just a little over Riddle’s height.

“*Sssee Massster, isss Una not beautiful?*” Onyx hissed as he wriggled out of the tunnel, a little out of breath.

Hadrian felt amusement zip through him at the massive size difference. Onyx looked like a mere worm compared to his ‘beautiful’ counterpart.

“*Una, my Massster isss here.*”

That mouth opened; two vicious fangs stark white were glistening. Hadrian's hand came up to rub his shoulder, not realising that cinnamon eyes followed the action thoughtfully.

"*Sssmellsss fresssh,*" said the basilisk.

Riddle crossed his arms over his chest. "*Hadrian is a Ssspeaker, Una.*"

What did one say to a basilisk that would try and kill you in the future? *"Hello, Una* ." He inwardly cringed at the greeting.

That sizeable nose, with two slits coming up to rest underneath its sealed eyelids came down to Hadrian. Her tongue flitted out - meaty and pink - coming a centimeter within touching him.

"*A Ssspeaker.*" It paused. "*You do not smell like kin.*"

"*I am the only one in my family to Speak*."

"*How lucky*." Una twisted its head towards its Master. "*How lucky we are to have another Ssspeaker.*"

"*Yes. Hadrian will be here often, helping with sssome resssearch.*"

Hadrian's eyebrows rose. Was Riddle giving the basilisk permission for Hadrian to enter at any time? He watched with some amusement as Onyx just stared up at Una. Later, he would have to have words with his companion about size and compatibility.

"She is a magnificent beast. Powerful and very deadly, just like Salazar Slytherin designed."

Emerald eyes turned to Riddle. "Is she the original basilisk?"

"Yes, Slytherin hatched her and ensured her survival here, in the depths of the school."

"For what reason?"

The other boy's gaze met his. "He put her here to kill the Mudbloods."

Hadrian's eyebrows snapped down. "That is an awful word to use."

"You sympathise with Muggles even when they abused you?" He was fiddling with something in his pocket. "Regardless of you, look what Muggles do. They are destructive, and you must know what they did

to our kind the last time they found out about us."

"They are not all bad," Hadrian said. "And Muggleborn cannot help where they have come from."

Riddle nodded his head back to the library and began walking. "They come into the Wizarding World, ignorant of our ways. They weaken our blood, and the idea of relations with a Muggle is sickening."

Hadrian had followed, and they climbed the stairs in the tunnel. "You cannot honestly believe that, Riddle. You cannot really think that they weaken our blood." They emerged into the library, where both of them distanced themselves across the table again. "Some of our strongest are Half-Blood, and one of my strongest friends was Muggleborn. Meanwhile, Purebloods are inbreeding and getting weaker." At Riddle's silence, he continued. "You know that you are strong, and me. Both of us are Half Bloods. As much as you hate Dumbledore, you must know his strength, and he is a Half Blood. We need diversity and new blood."

"Pureblood families would not allow it."

"And your followers are Purebloods, but look who commands them - a Half Blood." Hadrian gripped the back of his wooden chair that he stood behind, intently watching a myriad of emotions cross over the Slytherin's face.

"Please do not tell me you are on the side of bringing down the Statue of Secrecy?" Riddle drawled.

Hadrian swallowed heavily. "I am still weighing everything up."

There was a thick silence between them. Riddle broke it by scraping his chair back and sitting down. "You bring some interesting points forward." He tapped his finger on the table. "We have an hour before lunch to see if there is anything else in these few books I have found."

Hadrian sat down, watching in silence as Riddle drew his book closer and started to review his notes. The curl hung over his pale forehead, and dark eyelashes fluttered over his high cheekbones. Those long fingers peeled each crisp page, dusting over the Parselscript as if caressing the letters.

He blinked, his stomach lurching when he realised that he had been staring at Riddle - young Lord Voldemort. Hadrian hastily pulled his book closer and tried to lose himself in the yellowed pages.

Chapter 18

Chapter Notes

> Got this one out a bit quicker, but I hope you really like it and the direction it starts to take!
>
> Your comments really helped me push through life to make this happen.

Clutching the parchment in his hand, he wandered down from the Headmaster's Office. Hadrian had expected Dippet there, as he had been asked to attend after dinner, but apparently there had been an incident between two pupils that needed his attention - as it said on the short letter. The only other thing scrawled on there was that he had an appointment with the Unspeakable, with Dippet as well, Tuesday morning. He had to meet Dippet in his Office at 10:00.

Something in his stomach twisted at the idea of meeting Professor Saul Croaker. An Unspeakable was called *Unspeakable* for a reason. He had an issue with the idea that a man who was sworn to secrecy, wanted to actually meet Hadrian. How much had Dippet told the man or was able to tell him under the Unbreakable Vow.

Hadrian pocketed the parchment and strode down the stairs. After a long day yesterday, in Riddle's presence, dealing with researching he was exhausted. Abraxas made it his mission today (Sunday) to go through the logistics of the Wizengamot with Hadrian. It had been a really heavy weekend. Never had he thought that months into his time in the past, he would be spending the day with Riddle in the Chamber of Secrets without the aim to kill him or he would be taking politics lessons with Draco Malfoy's grandfather. It was a strange world.

He walked down the bottom floor corridor, which was pretty quiet save a couple of Second Years walking back to the Hufflepuff Common Room with books in their hands.

Something twisted in his scar as he turned down an empty corridor which had a few disused classrooms. This route was one Ron and he liked to take when they were late for Potions in the dungeons, as there was a secret Portrait that would lead down. It was something they had discovered right before the incident that sent him back in time.

Hadrian rubbed his forehead as a zap of something passed through

him. It was not pain, but a tingle that ignited his nerve endings. He grimaced. God knows what Riddle was up to, to cause that reaction.

He stopped when another zap came, much stronger - only with a sound in the distance of a chair or desk. Hadrian faltered at the odd sensation that made his stomach tighten. He passed the Portrait of six mermaids/mermen who waved at him as they basked in the rain of a storm on a rock.

There was a muffled sound.

Was someone in danger?

Hadrian located the classroom through another whimper. The door was closed, but no magic locking it. He grasped the handle, turning it quietly as not to notify the attacker. Hadrian's other hand went for his wand, grasping in the handle. He pushed his head and shoulder in, wishing he had not locked his Cloak - more securely this time - in his trunk.

And he froze.

Another moan - this time louder. A Ravenclaw Seventh Year boy was on his knees, a pale hand gripping his black hair.

Hadrian's cheeks exploded with heat as he heard the lewd noises. And the boy standing up - he knew. Riddle had his eyes shut, head slightly tipped back so the moonlight trickled over his handsome face. With the sudden pulse in his scar, Hadrian gasped as his stomach tightened, heat gathering there also.

He slammed the door and took off down the corridor. Hadrian hastily said the password to the Portrait and hurried inside the tight corridor. He rushed down the small staircase, his heart pounding. It was at the curve of the staircase, as it took an abrupt right turn into the dungeons, that he stopped. He leaned the back of his head on the cold stone wall, trying to get his breathing and the embarrassed heat from his body under control.

Riddle and a Ravenclaw boy?

Hadrian swallowed. He had never seen anything like that at Hogwarts. His experience of anything sexual had been that heated kiss between Cassius and him. Before that, a few kisses here and there. He hadn't really thought about people sneaking into classrooms and doing things.

His fingers skimmed his scar, which had calmed. Riddle's face had looked controlled, the only signs he had been enjoying himself was the tilt back of his head and the tight grip on that dark hair. Hadrian's eyes grew wide as the image stuck into his head. Who was the other boy? There were a few dark-haired male Ravenclaws in Seventh year. Why had Hadrian not looked properly? He had been too focused on Riddle.

"Fuck," Hadrian whispered, pulling on the strands of his hair that fell across his forehead. He took a deep breath in and hurried back to the common room, to go and hide under the covers.

***

Dippet's shoes made a slight click on the shiny surface of the floor as they strode through the Ministry. Hadrian was in his Hogwarts robes, having just come from Dumbledore's lesson. The man seemed very irritated that he was to miss the lesson, but it seemed Dippet had already told his Deputy.

His eyes ventured to the people all around them. They were dressed in more sombre robes he was used to, and there were strange fashionable quirks like pocket-watches and some even wore hats. In some ways, the wizarding world never changed. It was just cuts of robes. That was the problem with it all though. Everything was just so stuffy. So rigid.

He tried to concentrate on everything going on around him: owls, paper, robes swishing, people striding with clear missions… But his mind kept returning to that classroom, with Riddle's face tilted back. He had spent all night in his bed trying to convince himself that he was not affected. It was bloody Tom Riddle, not Cassius. Cassius was a safe option to go with - a relative unknown - or he was, until Hadrian had avoided him at all costs. Just because he said he would be friends, did not mean he was ready to proceed just yet with that. That did not mean it was okay to think about Riddle as attractive.

But his long, pale fingers gripping that inky dark hair -

"Hadrian?"

Mortified, he jolted out of his thoughts and turned his head to the Headmaster. "Yes, Sir?"

They were approaching a lift. “Have you considered your questions to Unspeakable Croaker?”

“Yes.”

Dippet raised an eyebrow. “Do not underestimate him, Hadrian. I need you to have learnt from our exchanges. He is a highly intelligent man.”

He just gave a nod as they entered the busy lift. It suddenly lurched to the left and then plummeted down. After a few twists and turns, the door flew open and they walked out. There was an odd sound of ticking - almost like the sound of clocks.

“How did you convince him to see us?”

“My initial questions piqued his interest - about time travel outside of a time turner. When I asked to meet him, you will have to realise he will have joined the two.”

He grimaced as they strode down a few dark corridors until they came to a door that had a golden plaque to the side, which read: ‘Office of *Unspeakable S. Croaker* ’. Dippet got out his wand and tapped the tip three times to the handle.

There was silence as he withdrew his wand. Then, the door swung open. Dippet gestured for Hadrian to enter first.

He walked into the sizeable office. A man with white hair sat at a curved desk, white hair tied back with a golden ribbon. There were all kinds of strange instruments in the room, but he drew his attention away from them as he wanted to focus on the task at hand. This was his last chance for any hope of returning back to the future - whatever that now was.

“Armando Dippet, it *has* been a while.” The man gave a large-mouthed grin. “And this must be the young man you wish for me to meet.” He gestured to the two chairs already spaced out across from his desk.

Hadrian took one of them, glad it wasn’t another uncomfortable wooden chair. He sunk into the pillowed folds, but tried to force himself to concentrate.

“Thank you for seeing us, Saul,” Dippet replied amicably, taking the other chair. “This is Hadrian Peverell.”

“So, your initial letter intrigued me, Armando.” The man sat forward, elbows on his desk. “You asked if there were any other documented time travellers, other than any accidental ones with time turners. You asked what would happen to the future and the consequences. When I offer to meet you, you insist on this young man accompanying you.”

Hadrian looked between the men, shifting and realised this was not a very good idea at all. Dippet had gotten this all wrong. Of all the ‘teaching’ he had given Hadrian, he had not even taken his own advice.

“I thought the Peverell’s were dead.”

“They are, apart from me,” Hadrian answered smoothly. “Grindelwald was after my mother, who was researching time travel - going through Europe. I feel she may have made a breakthrough, something that could help us end him.”

That smile stayed on the man’s lips, eyes burning into Hadrian’s. There was a slight tug on his mind and the raven-haired-boy shoved up his mental shields.

“My research into Time magic is forbidden to discuss with anyone outside of my department. The only thing I can give you are my papers, which are already published in the public domain.”

“Fine, well Sir, we should be on our way.” Hadrian stood up, and began to walk to the door.

“Hadrian.” Dippet’s voice was edging on a warning.

Unspeakable Croaker laughed. “I could offer to help...but I have conditions.”

“And they are?”

Hadrian glared at the Headmaster’s reply.

“I want to know everything. The truth. None of this rubbish about your mother.”

He frowned. If he wasn’t willing to give Riddle details on the future without protections, he was not going to allow this stranger. “No.”

Croaker turned his eyes back to the Headmaster. “You are abnormally quiet, Armando. I sense a Vow. What could be so important to warrant

you taking a Vow for a new student?" He leant back in his chair. "It all makes so much sense."

Hadrian rubbed his eyes before fully turning to face the two men.

"Of course, if anyone were from the future, then it would have to be reported to the Minister himself. Such information at your fingertips - Quidditch results, people's deaths...births…"

"Dippet - why did you bring me here?" Hadrian hissed.

"Saul, you were once very reasonable." Dippet frowned.

The Unspeakable grinned. "That was before I have been so restricted in my work, especially after Mintumble's...accidental excursion. The Ministry has limited us to studying so little. And then...you contacted me."

It was Dippet's turn to stand. "I have to apologise, Hadrian." He started towards the door.

"I was serious about informing the Ministry." Saul clasped his hands together. "But I understand this can all be a shock. I will give you until Saturday midnight to make your decision, Mr Pevrell."

"And what exactly is this decision?"

"Let me spell it out for you, dear boy. Either, you agree for me to run tests on you and potentially help you make sense of what will happen due to your unfortunate travel...or I inform the Ministry and you are forced to become my test subject. In fact, they might just keep you here."

Hadrian sneered at the man before ripping the door open and storming out. He was aware of Dippet marching after him but he flew into the lift, the older man just making it on time. They were not alone, and both of them simmered until they reached the Foyer. Both were utterly silent as they made their way to a Floo exit and went straight to Dippet's Office.

Immediately, he rounded on the Headmaster. "How dare you not check him before we meet him? He was *awful* ."

Dippet pinched the bridge of his nose. "It was my mistake, Hadrian. I am very sorry."

“Sorry?” He paused. “Sorry? I have the decision between being a guinea pig voluntarily or being a guinea pig against my will? Oh Hadrian, you will be fine - just learn from what I have taught you. You acted like a bloody Gryffindor with my life!”

“It is all right. I will meet with Croaker tomorrow and sort this.”

Hadrian shook his head. “How? How can you do that with the Vow? How can I even trust you enough to even release you from it? You are a Headteacher. You have no power over the Ministry.”

Dippet was silent, his head bowed slightly. He could not meet those *Avada Kedavra* eyes.

“There is no reason for me to stay here, any longer.”

That made the older man’s head snap back up. “Yes there is, Hadrian. You know the dark future ahead. You know what Tom Riddle will become if he is not prevented.” He took a step forward, staring down the furious teenager. “I have seen you embed yourself into their friendship group.”

“Oh yeah?” Hadrian bit out. “Well how am I going to continue this *noble* work from a Ministry prison cell?”

“We will find a way. Leave it with me, Hadrian.”

Hadrian managed to dislodge the disgusted noise from his throat before swiftly exiting the Headmaster’s Office. He could smell lunch wafting up through the corridors and marched all the way down there. His stomach twisted and his blood boiled through his veins like *Fiendfyre* .

The Main Hall was alive with the sound of cutlery and chatting.

Hadrian stormed through the doors and stalked over to the Slytherin table. He met cinnamon eyes, ignoring all the other boys in their group. “I need to speak to you.”

Riddle gestured to the space opposite him.

“No.” Hadrian’s hands clenched into fists by his sides. “In private.”

A dark eyebrow rose. “Hadrian, I am eating lunch.”

He was very aware of most people’s eyes on him in Slytherin. “I need a favour.”

Riddle's mouth pulled at the side. "Well, Hadrian, how can I say no?" He got to his feet in a graceful motion, placing his cutlery down. "Come along."

Hadrian refused to trail along behind the other boy, so he kept up the pace to walk alongside Riddle out of the Hall. They both strode down the corridor and down into the dungeons, where they chose the classroom that had been used for the duel between Lestrange and him.

Getting out his wand, Riddle cast a series of spells on the door.

Hadrian pulled a hand through his hair, stomping away from Riddle to get some distance between them.
"Does this have something to do with you leaving Dumbledore's lesson, first Period?"

"Dippet took me to Unspeakable Croaker at the Ministry, but the man was unhinged. The man's research has been stopped after some woman transported herself back in time and caused people to be 'unborn'," Hadrian hurried out. "But fucking Dippet-"

"Hadrian."

His large green eyes went to Riddle, whose face was neutral but his attention was solely on Hadrian.

"What do you want from me?"

He drew in a shaky breath. "I want you to help me."

"*How?*"

Hadrian glanced away at the slip into Parseltongue. "*I need to get rid of Croaker, or obliviate him or something*."

A slow smile crept over that full mouth. "*Tell me.*"

"*I have Dippet under an Unbreakable Vow, to protect me and the future. Before that, he contacted Croaker at the Department of Mysteries to ask him a few questions about the impact of time travel on the timeline and ways of travelling without a time turner. Today, Dippet takes me to meet the man and he is disgusting* ." Hadrian clenched his jaw, remembering the man's slightly wrinkled face and that inane grin. "*Dippet is fucking stupid by thinking he knew the man. He knew. He knew I was from the future by connecting the dots, and now he is threatening to go to the*

Ministry to lock me up as an experiment, or I come willingly by Saturday."

Riddle was quiet as he leaned back against a discarded desk that was pushed against the wall. His arms crossed over his broad chest. "*Why my help?"*

"*This is a* Ministry *Official, Riddle. You killed your family.*"

Dark eyebrows rose. "*You want him killed?*" The smile grew. "*Oh, Hadrian , I did underestimate you*."

"*Not kill - just*…" he trailed off, flailing his hand in the air.

"*I know. So, a favour. This is quite a big one. Asking to save your life from the Ministry*."

Hadrian swallowed heavily. He chewed his bottom lip as a dark chasm started to open up inside his stomach. It felt like he was making a deal with the devil. "*I will tell you*." He paused to try and control the waver in his voice. "*The future. What I know it to be.*" There was no way he was going to end up in Croaker's grip. That insane smile and look told him exactly how he would be treated. His life would be void. He knew too much; as Croaker said, he knew Quidditch scores and all kinds of information he could profit from. "*But not until it is over, and we have dealt with him*."

Riddle pushed himself off the table, crossing the space between them. He struck out a hand. "*I want a Vow*."

Hadrian winced. "*I thought we did not do Vows*?"

"*The Vow is for you - not Unbreakable - just us promising the exchange.*" He watched as Hadrian took his offered hand. When their hands joined, Riddle pulled Hadrian so that he stumbled closer. " *But if you break it, I will break you,*" he hissed.

Hadrian glared up at the other Slytherin boy. "*I swear*."

But the hand still held. "*I want to see it - so I know it is real*."

Emerald eyes flashed. "*Fine*." The fear of a lifetime spent as the Ministry's prisoner made his heart beat faster, and the grip of the warm hand in his more comforting.

"*Now, Hadrian, we are going to go to Potions. We are to talk tomorrow,*

after I have formulated a plan."

With those brown eyes so close, Hadrian could make out flecks of crimson - tiny ones. And his mind flitted to Tom's face tilting back, bathed in moonlight… Hadrian pulled his hand free, cheeks pinking as he stepped away. His scar tingled and his magic buzzed.

"*Fine.*"

Chapter 19

Chapter Notes

> Took a while longer as I accidentally deleted two hours worth of work! But I hope this is worth the wait.

Rubbing his eyes, he winced at the ache behind them. Sleep had been difficult to grasp but had he really expected anything else?

Hadrian watched as Riddle murmured to Lestrange, Mulciber, Nott, Avery and Malfoy by his bedside. Every so often, the boys would look up at Hadrian in speculation. But Hadrian did not need to know what was said. He already knew Riddle's intention. Their cover story. One they had gone through time and time again over the remains of the week. One Riddle made him repeat over and over again. No studying in the library, nothing public. Instead, they would be working and duelling in the disused classrooms - even missing lunch. They had been too busy debating some Arithmancy.

An alibi.

Grimacing, Hadrian looked away from the group. He tried to glean some comfort from his beloved Invisibility Cloak in his lap, but that just reminded him of how he had achieved it in this existence - by Imperioing his grandfather. Since then, he had made a deal with the devil himself.

Riddle was formulaic, logical and brutal in his methodology. The opposite to Hadrian's rash streak that caused him to charge head first into danger. He had hoped he had started to shed that tendency, but here he was, waiting to go to Hogsmeade with the other boy and put their sick plan into action.

"Hadrian?"

Emerald eyes rose, to see Riddle standing by the door. The rest of their friends watched, thinly veiled curiosity in their faces. They knew nothing except that he and Riddle would be away from the castle for the morning and into the afternoon. Riddle wouldn't even give them a reason. They all knew something was up, because both of them had been disappearing each night of the week to the Chamber of Secrets.

He stood up, wrapping the cloak tightly in a small package before

putting it into his robe pocket. Hadrian followed Riddle out of the dormitory, common room and then into the corridor, where they started to walk side by side.

“Did you get it?”

“You know I did,” Hadrian answered tightly, fingertips brushing the vial in his pocket. His nerves were already frayed, but the proximity to Riddle’s magic tested them even further. Throughout the week, he had to steel himself against the dark and seductive magic of the Heir of Slytherin. All Hadrian’s magic wanted to do was dance with it. No wonder why the man had attracted so many followers along the way; his magic was like a heady drug.

They ascended the stairs in silence before taking the main stairs up to the statue of the One-Eyed-Witch, that he had to disclose to Riddle as a secret entrance to Hogsmeade. Hadrian supplied the password and they entered the passage. When the statue scraped back to its original state, it left both of them in the silence of the hallway.

He let Riddle lead the way through the narrow strip.

“An hour?”

“Yes.” An hour to get to Hogsmeade. Hadrian’s stomach twisted. He had the letter sent to Croaker burnt into his mind.

Dear Unspeakable Croaker,

I have thought a lot about our brief conversation, Tuesday morning, and would like to discuss with you a way forward that will suit us both. This time, I will decline the presence of my Headmaster, who feels the need to protect me as a student.

Therefore, I would like to meet you in Hogsmeade at eleven o’clock promptly, outside the Hog’s Head, where I would like to engage in a conversation about the necessary steps forward.

Hadrian Peverell

It had not been written by him. Physically, yes. But Riddle had stood over him, pacing just behind as he narrated the short and sweet letter

to Croaker. Riddle insisted on many revisions, until Hadrian's knuckles had ached.

Doubt had plagued him since sending it by owl, borrowed from Abraxas. But fear had won overall. For years, he had spent his existence ruled by the need for him - a teenager - to kill a Dark Lord. A prisoner of destiny. Now, the shackles were off. No one knew the future apart from him. He was now the master of his own destiny, and yet that Unspeakable wanted to strip that all away from him.

"How did you find this secret entrance?" Riddle asked, breaking the silence.

He jolted from his thoughts. "Um, my dad and his friends made an enchanted map of Hogwarts that had a lot of the secret passageways." He paused. "Also, you could see where everyone was."

Riddle hummed. "That is rather useful. Your father was very creative."

Hadrian was silent, his face draining of colour when he was forced to remind himself that in front of him was his parents' killer...in the future. It was something that did not sit quite comfortably with him. Should he punish Riddle for an event that had not even happened yet? It has ended up being a moral dilemma that did not seem to have a particular answer. As it stood now, Riddle did not know the future, apart from the idea that people knew of his secret horcruxes. He could still very much turn out to be the snake-faced demon of the future.

"Of course, not very responsible of a father, giving the map to his son."

"He didn't." Hadrian stared at the bare, stone walls that penned them into the narrow corridor.

"No?"

"My friend's brothers gave it to me in my Third Year."

Riddle gave a non-committal noise and they resumed their walk. Hadrian found his eyes wandering more than once to the other Slytherin's back more than once, remembering once more the other night…

After a long stretch of silence, they emerged in the basement of Honeydukes. It instantly smelt of heady chocolate and sugar, though

much more toned down than in the future. Did the Wizards have to ration their supplies also in the war? Hadrian watched the wall seal behind him, behind the barrels.

Riddle effortlessly cast a disillusionment on himself, as Hadrian took out his cloak and wrapped himself into its silvery folds. They ascended the stairs up into the main shop, taking it slowly to make sure that the area was clear of the shopkeeper. There were only a small handful of students and locals in the shop, and they bypassed them easily.

Outside, it was cold. But wasn't it always in Scotland? Hadrian shuddered, wishing for the grip of winter to release the country a bit. There was no snow, which worked in their favour of not leaving behind any footprints. He kept in pace with Riddle, again not wanting to give the boy the idea that he was just another one of his followers at his heels.

They moved through the streets, to the outskirts where the Hog's Head stood. It was dark on the outside, matching the grim inside he knew too well from his meeting there. The Tudor-esque pub was tilted to one side, overgrown weeds climbing at its base like it was trying to swallow the building whole. Clouds swarmed in over head, casting a grey muted light across the surroundings. Hadrian could see Hogwarts from here in all of its glory. It was beautiful, even in the death throes of winter.

"Hadrian."

He stopped.

"We are a few minutes early, like planned."

Hadrian nodded until he realised Riddle could not see. "Yes."

"We will follow the plan...exactly."

Swallowing at the deep voice at his side, he allowed his gaze to wander the empty road to the pub. How did the Hog's Head survive with the lack of business? Had it ever been busy at any time? His palms were sweaty, and he had to wipe them against his trousers multiple times.

After an additional minute, Croaker apparated just down the road. He was buried in a thick cloak, ambling down the path with a slight bounce in his step. The very flash of grey hair visible under the hood, made Hadrian's stomach clench with white-hot anger. He remembered

that stupid, inane grin. The smugness of the man oozing from every single pore he had as he stared at Hadrian like he was a specimen in a jar.

Hadrian drew his wand out of his pocket, flicking it out to point at the man. " *Stupify* ." His emotions caught on the first syllable, practically hissing it out.

The spell hit Croaker square in the chest, spinning him around with the force of it. Hadrian watched as the man crumpled to the floor, legs akimbo. He strode over, and he leant over and observed the Unspeakable. His eyes were shut, but strands of his grey hair were wet, having landed in a puddle by the dirt track.

A coil of pleasure, hot and heavy, twisted in his stomach. Now who was the vulnerable one? He shifted off his cloak and placed it over the man, covering everything but his head. Wand still in hand, he cast a feather-light charm on Croaker.

Hadrian pulled the man up, covering his head with the cloak as he turned towards Riddle. His mouth instantly went dry, heart lurching up to wedge deep in his throat.

Riddle's wand was pointed at him.

"*Dumbledore would like you to show manners...bow to Death, Harry…" The stark white snake-like face eager as he looked upon Harry, surrounded by gravestones and black-clad Death Eaters.*

"*Corium,*" Riddle uttered.

It wasn't the white-hot pain of *Crucio* or the blast of green *Avada Kedavra* . It was the slight coldness of the disillusionment charm.

Relief flooded into his veins, causing his shoulders to slump. Hadrian was suddenly aware of Croaker at his side.

The plan.

Hadrian started to make his way down the dirt path, knowing this time Riddle was following him. Luckily, with the feather-light charm, he could lift Croaker with one arm, but the handling was awkward and the positioning made his arm ache. He got half way down the road, and the height of the man and positioning made him stop and release a disgruntled noise.

“Need a hand?”

He swallowed at the low voice behind him. “How do you even know where I am?” he hissed.

“I can feel your magic.”

Hadrian felt a trickle of sweat run down from his neck down his back. The Unspeakable moved, with Riddle relocating some of Croaker’s limbs so the man was hanging between them. They continued their journey in silence but Hadrian’s brain was stuck on the idea that the other Slytherin could feel him, as much as he could feel Riddle. What was going on with their magic? Being in close proximity to the future Dark Lord was proving to be hard work. Imbolc was also coming up, which meant another ritual. It was time that he started to think of an excuse to not join in.

The Shrieking Shack soon came into view. When they had been coming up with the plan, Hadrian had suggested the building. Riddle had expressed distaste for going into the haunted shack. The only things he could say that made it haunted was that there were rumours of ghosts and people dying. Of course, that would frighten the man with horcruxes away.

They entered the building through the back entrance and then Riddle locked it.

Dust fell from the ceiling above, through the cracks of the floorboards and fell onto Hadrian’s nose. He sneezed, wrinkling his nose. Everything in here was the same as in the future...maybe with a few less pieces of broken furniture and claw marks from Lupin’s era. It was an utter waste of a building, in quaint Hogsmeade, but he wasn’t complaining now when they had just attacked a Ministry Official and needed somewhere to hide.

Riddle released the magic holding them and whipped off the cloak from the unconscious man between them. He tossed the cloak to Hadrian, who caught it and let Riddle maneuver Croaker onto the floor. As Hadrian folded his cloak, he watched as the other boy cast various spells, causing chains to attach to the floor, wrapping around the older man so he was immobile. Riddle pocketed the man’s wand as well.

Hadrian stared at the man, who was sitting upright - the chains spelled that way. Like this, he looked useless, nothing to be afraid of. Just some old guy. Were they doing the right thing? Maybe he should

have just met with Croaker and sorted this out...somehow. Maybe Dippet could have worked something out.

“Do not let second thoughts cloud your judgment, Hadrian,” Riddle said, walking over to stand by Hadrian’s side so he could still look down upon their prisoner. His yew wand dangled from his fingertips.

Before Hadrian could respond, Croaker let out a small moan and his head started to move. He wanted to move forward, rip off the chains and let the Unspeakable go. This was all a mistake. What would Hermione and Ron think if they could see him now, standing in the Shrieking Shack with Tom Riddle, with a Ministry Official chained on the floor in front of them? But they weren’t here. They weren’t even born yet.

Eyes fluttered open and quickly focused on the two dark-haired boys that stood a couple of metres away. Croaker shifted. The sound of metal echoed in the room. “What is this?” the man snarled.

He was met with silence.

Those pale eyes landed on Hadrian. “You! You leave me no choice but to tell the Ministry who you are - *Peverell* . I should let you know that bringing me here against my will, will carry a serious sentence for you and your *friend* . I suggest you boys let me go now, before you get into any more trouble.”

Riddle smiled. “You are not going anywhere, Unspeakable. Not until we are done with you.”

Croaker sneered. “You have no idea who you are dealing with, *boy* .”

Hadrian’s hands tightened into fists by his side at ‘boy’, and Croaker’s face seemed to merge with Vernon’s in his subconscious. “I know who we are dealing with,” he replied, stepping away from Riddle and closer to the man sat on the floor. “We are dealing with someone without a wand, wrapped in chains and at the mercy of two wizards.” He paused and watched the man concentrate before looking confused. “And you can forget about any wandless magic. My... *friend* has made sure that is not possible for you at the moment.”

Croaker’s sneer deepend. “Let me guess, you want me to let you go free? That I won’t tell the Ministry who you are?”

Hadrian smiled, though it did not reach his eyes. “Oh, I know you will not agree to that. You made it very clear to Dippet and I, that you are

reaching the end of your career with no real breakthrough finds. Your department's little mistake caused your research all to be halted. And you see me as your ticket out. There is no way you would ever let me be free."

"Is Dippet involved in this as well?" Croaker tried to twist his head to look around the room, but his field of vision was limited.

"Dippet was a fool to bring me to you."

"Oh, and I thank him for it." That smile was back on the older man's face, warped and too large for his face. "Now, I grow weary of this game. Let me go, and we will discuss your time with us at the Ministry, Hadrian. Do you not feel special that you have been selected for such a prestigious position? Our names will go down in history!"

"You see, that does not quite work," Riddle purred. He prowled around the man before ending up at his back, so the man could not see him. "Hadrian's secrets belong to me, and me only." The bone-white wand touched the Unspeakable's temple before drifting down to skim his cheek.

Hadrian glared at him. "Riddle-"

"Hadrian, this man wants to lock you away forever, and pry every piece of information out of you for *his* benefit." Tom's eyes were dark in the dim lighting of the room. "Lock you away, just like your Muggle relatives did to you...locking you away in that cupboard of yours."

This was *not* the plan. "My Muggle relatives have nothing to do with this," he argued.

Riddle removed the wand from the man, straightening his back and looking over at the raven-haired boy. "Oh, they have everything to do with this. When have you ever been free? Summers of sleeping in that cupboard-"

"They gave me a room," Hadrian interjected angrily. "After I found out I was a wizard, I got a room."

That elicited a hollow laugh from Riddle. "With what? A lock on the door? Did you still have to fend for scraps?"

A growing pool of horror was opening inside of Hadrian at the other boy's words. No, there was more than a lock on the door. Bars on the windows. The threat of not attending Hogwarts. Missing meals,

sometimes a whole day, maybe one instance when it was two days worth. He would regress to that. Croaker would lock him up. Hadrian would never be allowed to attend Hogwarts, never be able to make his own choices. Just like Dumbledore had brought him up as a 'soldier', with no future but to kill Voldemort. A pawn. Just another, expendable pawn.

"Let's get this done," he finally uttered, unable to look at Riddle.

Croaker laughed. "You think I came to meet you without fail safes?" He shook his head and the chains clunked against the rotten floorboards. "Dippet comes to see me with a *Slytherin* student? What do you want? To negotiate?"

"There are no negotiations. I will not go."

"Well, your friend here said you were kept in a cupboard. What if we give you a proper bed? Maybe a view of London? We could even let your friend here visit you, under supervision of course."

Hadrian wanted to gape at the man's absurd 'negotiations', but he instead rolled his eyes. "I will not be a pawn in anyone's game, Croaker."

"Ah, but you don't belong here. This is not your time. You have already broken everything. Your future? It no longer exists. The friends and family you love? They may never come to existence. But you, you will probably live even if you are not born in the future, as you exist now in this time. You are just one person. We could work together, so that the future you know, can still come to pass."

Hadrian felt the brush of a smile on his lips. "Your problem, Croaker, is that you underestimate everyone around you. I never want the future that I came from, even if that means changing everything."

"You're just a boy."

The laughter bubbled up inside his chest until it spilled out. "*I've never been just a boy*," he hissed, walking up to the man. Those pale eyes grew as wide as the moon as the older man took in the Parseltongue. "*What part is next, Riddle?*"

" *An Unbreakable Vow is useless against torture. We cannot rely on that* ," Riddle answered, walking back to stand at Hadrian's side.

Croaker looked between them both. "Both of you...Parselmouths?

Father....maybe a grandfather maybe? A very dark trait…"

Hadrian snorted. "Trust me, he is not related to me."

Riddle gave him an odd look before turning his attention back to the grey-haired Unspeakable. "You said fail safes?"

Croaker remained silent until he jolted, his mouth opening and closing as his eyes watered. Hadrian frowned before looking at Riddle, seeing the boy intensely staring into pale-blue eyes. *Legilimency*? Was Riddle tearing through the man's mind? Hadrian was in two minds. Did he intervene? But then they would not get the information? He had been on the receiving end of Voldemort's invasion of the mind…

"He has a pensive. He had also copied his memories into there. That is his failsafe," Riddle relayed, before Hadrian could make his decision.

The Unspeakable moaned, his eyelids fluttering and a stream of blood seeping from his nose.

"But our plan was to just wipe his memory."

Riddle nodded. "And now we have to adapt to the new information."

"Riddle, you are not stupid. You knew he could have kept memories in a pensive. Why did we not plan for that?"

The taller boy turned, looming over Hadrian. A pale hand came up to push Hadrian's hair away from his scar. "Because you would not go through with this if I told you. I know you have the ability to use some of the Unforgivables; I have seen it with my own eyes. But this involves more than you have done before."

More? Hadrian took a step back, biting his lower lip with the electric tingles that travelled down his scar and deep into his body. "Riddle, no."

"If we use a Memory Charm, he still has the pensive memories and he can regain his old memories. If we torture him into losing his mind, he still has the pensive memories and the possibility of regaining his memories. An Unbreakable Vow is useless, as he can break it. Yes, at the risk of his magic...but you are the opportunity of a lifetime. And he does not have long left."

Hadrian just looked on, cold fingers hooking into every single one of his organs.

“You know what has to be done, Hadrian.”

He swallowed, glancing at the man, who was still affected by the ravaging of his mind. “I could go.”

“You said yourself, that you cannot let the future happen the way you have seen it,” Riddle replied, voice deep and smooth. “If you want, I could do it for you...in exchange for a Wizarding Debt. Maybe I could even use it for my next horcrux.”

Hadrian shoved a hand through his hair before releasing a long string of expletives.

“You go Hadrian, and all you will ever be is that little boy locked in a cupboard. A freak.”

His heartbeat thundered in his ears. “We can’t do this. I can’t do this. You can’t do this.”

“Forever under someone’s thumb. Your future will happen.”

Hadrian’s eyes closed and he saw. He saw the imagined deaths of his parents, of Quirrell disintegrating at his fingertips, Ginny Weasley’s lifeless body in the Chamber, Cedric’s body in the graveyard, Sirius’ body floating into the Veil as Bellatrix cackled happily… And how many more? How many more would die before he finally faced off with Voldemort? Ron, Hermione? Dumbledore? The Weasley’s?

“Too much rests on me, to get this right,” Hadrian croaked out finally. His eyes opened, green and vivid. “But this cannot be one of your horcruxes…and we already have a deal, Riddle. I am not making another with you. Regardless if you do it, his death is on me.”

Riddle’s face was unreadable as he gestured over to the groaning Unspeakable. “Make sure you mean it.”

Hadrian drew in a breath, his eyes pricking with heat. “After? The pensive?”

“We go to his home and destroy it.”

“The...the body?” He swallowed heavily at the word.

“It will be in the house, as well.”

Hadrian raised his wand. He had to mean it. His eyes soaked in Croaker’s face, that slack-jawed face that as soon as the man came

properly too, would curve into that infuriating smile. And those pale eyes would stare at him hungrily. Prodded like an animal. Kept locked in a cage, whilst Riddle transformed into Voldemort. His friends...all dead...family…

"*Avada Kedavra*."

Emerald light shot from his wand, hitting the man in the stomach. Croaker slumped against the chains. Dead.

Hadrian stared before his gaze drifted down to the wand in his hand. His magic pulsed with energy.

A hand took his, pushing down his wand. Then his vision was taken over by cinnamon eyes. "How did it feel?"

All words were stuck in his throat. The pulse of his magic had robbed him of most of his senses, and with Riddle's proximity, their magic *danced* . There was a tightness in his stomach that throbbed in rhythm with the warm tingling of his scar.

Fingers touched his chin.

"It feels...like a...whirlpool," Hadrian breathed, eyes fluttering shut as his senses became overwhelmed by the sensations of the other boy's proximity.

Something soft brushed against his lips before it withdrew, along with the heady magic. Emerald eyes shot open. Riddle was standing over Croaker's body. A body. The body. His throat convulsed with a swallow.

"Hadrian, we need to get rid of the evidence now."

Evidence. Evidence…

He nodded numbly. Get rid of the evidence.

Chapter 20

Chapter Notes

Please don't hate me after this chapter!

Your comments were so amazing in the last chapter, and I am glad you liked the turn of events. I loved seeing your reactions, and there is more drama to come!

Hadrian did not reach for the tea that had been made for him. It sat on the desk, a little too milky for his personal taste but he would happily drink it. Maybe it would calm his nerves. But he didn't. Riddle had warned him against it. When he had gotten the letter to ask him to attend Dippet's Office, Riddle had made it clear that he was not to take any offered food or drink. Veriterserum was tasteless.

His eyes roamed around the office before Dippet cleared his throat, placing his quill down.

"Apologies, Hadrian, I had something urgent to respond to." Dippet stood, folding the letter. With a swish of ash-coloured robes, he moved to the window, handing the parchment over and muttering to his owl where he wanted it delivered.

"That is fine."

Dippet strode over and sat down, picking up his tea and sipping it. The silence fell thick between them until the Headmaster took a copy of *The Daily Prophet* and slid it across the desk to settle next to Hadrian's untouched drink.

There were a multitude of headlines crammed onto the front page.

"What?" Hadrian pulled his face into a frown.

The paper flicked over, limiting it to the bottom half. ' *Blaze takes Professor's life* ' read the headline in bold black ink. Hadrian had already read it, yesterday when it had been published and Riddle had given it to him over breakfast. However, he feigned reading it for the first time.

"Professor Croaker?" Hadrian asked.

"He died. In a fire, in his home. Luckily, it appears he was asleep

when it happened."

"That's a shame." He paused. "How did the fire start?"

Riddle pushed the body onto the bed, and both of them watched the corpse bounce on the mattress before settling. He flicked his wand, and Croaker's clothes were removed. They had found no pyjamas, so it was clear the man probably slept nude.

"Candles. He is reading…falls asleep with the candles." Riddle eyed the four candles on the bedside table. "Too drunk, he does not wake."

"He has not drunk anything," Hadrian replied.

Riddle shot him a small smirk before lifting the bottle of whisky he had stolen from the living room on their way upstairs. "I spell it into his stomach." He flicked his wand, and the amber liquid reduced in the clear bottle.

With another flick, the candles burned where they lay. Riddle took the Unspeakable's arm and flung it at the candles, as if he were in the throes of sleep.

"Candles by his bedside." Dippet stared at him.

Hadrian gave a slight nod. "That is unfortunate." He met the Headteacher's gaze. "What did you want to see me about?"

"He died on Saturday. The day we were to make the decision."

He hummed. "Yes. It is very sad."

Dippet sighed. "Where were you on Saturday, Hadrian?"

"Studying."

"You did not turn up to lunch."

Hadrian nodded. "We got caught up in some stupid Arithmacy debate in the classroom we were studying in, in the dungeons."

"We?"

"Antonin, Dorian, Elias, Abraxas, Silas, Riddle and Avery." He arched an eyebrow at the man. "Are you questioning me for a reason, Headmaster?"

The older man's lips thinned. "Hadrian, I ask this as you refused to meet me all week to discuss Unspeakable Croaker's request. He ends up dead on the day he gives us for his deadline."

Hadrian allowed his face to transform into one of disbelief. "You think I did it? I have trusted you with knowledge of who I am, and what the future looks like. You know how I have fought against the Dark my entire life. And you accuse me of...murdering someone?"

Dippet exhaled noisily, pinching the bridge of his nose. "I worry about Riddle's influence."

"This is ridiculous." Hadrian stood up.

"Sit down, Hadrian."

"No." He crossed his arms over his chest. "You know, this type of suspicion is part of the reason Riddle turns out that way - into Voldemort. Dumbledore's prejudices fueled everything at school."

Dippet's nostrils flared before his expression fell. "I apologise, Hadrian." His finger circled the rim of his cup before he looked into burning emerald eyes. "But promise me one thing. Promise me that you will come to me if you feel you are slipping."

Hadrian shook his head. "You put me in danger once, Headmaster. Why should I trust you again?" Without waiting for a response, he left the office and walked down the corridor. He tried to control his breathing, but his heart was clawing at his chest trying to get out. His fingers trembled and he almost walked straight into a small gaggle of First Year Gryffindors.

Muttering an apology, he swept through the castle and threw himself on his bed in his dormitory. Hadrian planted his face into his pillow, body curling into a foetal position. A sob escaped his throat, tears falling wetly into the silver pillowcase.

Images of Croaker's face flitted through his mind...the inane smile...the blood seeping from his nose...the blank and dead expression…

Was he just as bad as Riddle now?

"Hadrian?"

He ignored the quiet voice, too upset to feel embarrassed.

A hand slid onto his shoulder, gently squeezing. “I know Binns’ classes are bad, but not this bad.” The hand stroked down his back, in firm but gentle motions. “I asked to check on you.”

Hadrian took in a deep breath before turning around, leaving the comfort of the pillow. It was blue eyes he saw first, with blonde strands of hair falling into them. Cassius was devastatingly handsome. The shadows of the dormitory threw planes of darkness across his face, a mix of green light pouring across the bed from the lake above.

Pale fingers brushed over his cheeks, chasing away the tear marks on Hadrian’s cheeks. “I won’t ask why you are upset.” Cassius paused. “You can tell me in your own time.”

Hadrian’s chest tightened before he turned his face away to stare at the window, where shadows floated past. “Have you ever felt…” He trailed off, biting down on his bottom lip.

Cassius was silent, his hand sweeping down to his shoulder to squeeze gently.

He closed his eyes. “Have you ever felt like you are slipping away?”

“More than you know.” There was amusement tinged in with the reply. “Look, Hadrian, it probably is not my place to say this...but you need to be careful about getting close to Tom. You need to understand, as a new member of Slytherin, that he does not care about anyone but himself. Yes, he is magnificent and powerful...and we follow and believe his cause. But...do not fall under his spell.”

It was too late. Riddle wasn’t bewitching him. No, Riddle was a spider and Hadrian was trapped in a very sticky web. It wasn’t just their magic or parseltongue that joined them now. Death joined them. Hadrian had murdered someone...just because he wanted to.

“Jealous?” he managed to say, trying to fight away the darkness of his mind.

Something crossed Avery’s face as Hadrian turned his head back. Cassius’ fingers crept back up to Hadrian’s cheek, gently stroking.

“Always.” Cassius bent down, brushing a kiss over his lips.

Emerald eyes widened, his mind flickering back to that classroom. Of the moans floating out...and Riddle’s head tilting back. Hadrian found his hand drifting up, to take the other Slytherin’s tie.

He tugged Cassius down to kiss him once again. The kiss was gentle at first, until Avery's hand took raven hair and pulled his head back. Hadrian gasped, and a warm tongue slid against his. He let go of the tie, his hands gripping Cassius' shoulders, which were slim but strong.

The sounds of their kissing filled the silence of the room.

Hadrian made a startled noise as Cassius moved and his legs fell either side of his. Their bodies pressed flush together. He marvelled at the weight of another person on top of him, his mind focusing on their chests...legs and waists joined. With a strangled noise, Hadrian pulled his head to the side, gasping for breath.

Hot, wet kisses pressed to his neck. He arched up as Cassius' teeth brushed against the skin. It coaxed a moan from Cassius, who pulled away. Blue and green eyes met.

"You are…"

Hadrian pulled Cassius down into another kiss. Avery groaned, pressing his hips down.

Suddenly, Hadrian became aware of a presence, something familiar. He gasped as Cassius disappeared. There was a loud noise from Lestrange's bed.

He pushed up onto his elbows, face draining of colour. Riddle stood in the doorway of the dormitory, wand dangling from his fingers. An unreadable expression was on his face. There was a creaking noise before Cassius emerged from Silas' duvet, face flushed.

"Binns is expecting you back, *Avery* ," Riddle said, almost hissing out Cassius' name. When there was no movement, he glared at Lestrange's bed. "Go, now."

Cassius clambered out of the bed and whisked out of the room, leaving Riddle and Hadrian alone. Hadrian pulled the covers into his lap, glowering at the Heir of Slytherin as he started to come to his senses.

"What are you doing here?"

"What are *you* doing here?" Hadrian snapped back.

Riddle strode over to the end of the bed, staring down at him. "You were hidden in the library all Sunday, and now you are skipping

classes? No wonder Dippet wanted to see you."

Avada Kedavra eyes flashed. "Fuck off, Riddle. What I do is none of your business."

That full mouth twisted. "From now on, it *is* my business. Get ready to go to class. You can't afford to draw attention to yourself." He turned his back on Hadrian. "Tonight, after dinner, we meet in the Chamber. The pensive is ready, and it is time to call in your end of the deal." Riddle left the dormitory.

Hadrian exhaled a frustrated sound, hitting his fist into his rumpled duvet.

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It was not where he wanted to be. No amount of hiding in the library yesterday helped him try and get things right in his head. No amount had cleared his conscience either. Images of Croaker in the Shrieking Shack haunted him, but not in the way that he thought it would. He saw the flash of green light, but then the energy and his magic dancing with Riddle's. It was the effect of casting the spell that had affected him the most, leading him into more smothering guilt.

Hadrian stared at the jewel-encrusted bowl sitting on top of the large desk. Every emerald winked at him in the glowing candlelight.

When Riddle had interrupted Cassius and his...whatever it was, things had been slightly different in their group. In Potions and Transfiguration, Silas and Abraxas had intercepted him and made sure that he sat with one of them instead of his usual place near Cassius. It was difficult to see where the change had come from. Was it Avery, especially after Hadrian had rejected him before? Or was it Riddle, trying to keep Hadrian's mind focused, so nobody gets suspicious?

"You know, it helps to clear your mind first."

Hadrian startled at the voice behind him, his magic slipping from his control. He quickly clamped it back.

The bowl's silvery liquid shimmered. There were runes encrusting the top of the bowl, old runes. Probably put there by Salazar Slytherin

himself.

His gut clenched as he fingered his wand, which lay in front of him on the table also. His eyes flickered up as Riddle's long fingers pushed the bowl across the table, so that it was right under Hadrian's nose.

"Have you thought about where to begin?"

He drew in a breath, not looking at the other Slytherin. "Yes." He lifted his wand. "Riddle, are you sure you want this?"

There was a long pause. "Do it."

Hadrian had been studying the way to extract memories into a pensive whilst Riddle had been going through the plans for Croaker's...end. He raised his wand and placed it at his temple. There was a tingle, before he moved his wand down to the pensive, the silver threads of his memory floating in the air before sliding into the liquid.

Riddle drew the bowl over to where he stood, beside Hadrian. He lowered his head into the fluid.

The silence was deafening. He could see what Riddle was viewing. The first memory was a carefully chosen one. Riddle had seen his childhood, knew what that was like. Knew he lived without parents. This was Hagrid...the shack where Vernon had hidden them so Harry would not get his letter...The Leaky Cauldron…

Hadrian swallowed, his heart aching with how hard it was pounding against his ribcage. Was he doing the right thing? What if nothing changed? But what if everything changed?

After an hour, Riddle resurfaced. His mouth pinched and he swept away to a bookcase, back turned to Hadrian. Hadrian took his wand, lifting the copy of the memory and planted it back.

It took another few minutes, for Riddle to walk back over, sitting down in the chair opposite Hadrian.

"I kill your parents."

Hadrian winced at the directness of the statement, but he met those curious, cinnamon eyes. "Yes."

"You know me as Voldemort."

"Yes."

Riddle's mouth twisted. "You know that oaf, Hagrid."

He glared. "Yes...and I know he did not kill Myrtle last year. You got him expelled, to cover up for your crimes. Hagrid is a good man."

Riddle snorted. "He brought an acromantula into the castle. That half-giant brought numerous things from the Forbidden Forest that would endanger people."

Hadrian raised an eyebrow. "You released a *basilisk* into the student body."

There was another silence. "How did a one-year-old baby…"

"Destroy you?" It was Hadrian's turn to smirk at Riddle's outraged face. "I am still not quite sure. Dumbledore said it was my mother's love."

Riddle released a disgusted noise. "Love?"

He shrugged. "As I said, I'm still not sure."

Those eyes rose. "And I gave you that scar."

Hadrian pulled his hair over the lightning bolt. "Stop staring."

"Are you not curious?" Riddle tilted his head to the side. "That is not a usual scar. I hit you with the Killing Curse...and I become....something else. Not dead." He froze.

"What?" Hadrian shifted, unnerved by the expression on the other boy's face.

"Nothing." He shook his head. "Why do I go after your family?"

"That is a different memory."

Riddle stood. "I want to know more."

Hadrian sighed. "It's getting late."

When the Heir of Slytherin stood up, giving him a pointed look, he sighed and placed his wand back to his temple. He withdrew his next memory that he had lined up, watching with bated breath as it moved into the pensive. Once more, Riddle submerged.

It would be the Forbidden Forest this time. His detention, walking

along with Malfoy...wanting Fang as a guard dog. The hunt for a bleeding unicorn...a black cloaked figure...not human...not a ghost...something else… Unicorn blood dribbling from a bared mouth under the guise of the cloak. Pain.

Riddle came out of the pensive with a jolt. However, instead of retreating to a corner, he suddenly made a move. He pulled Hadrian's chair out and slammed his hands either side, onto the arms - trapping the raven-haired boy.

"Is that what I become?"

Hadrian swallowed, looking up at the face that hovered above his. "You know the answer to that."

"How? How can you…" Riddle stopped for a moment. "You are seen as my defeat." One of the hands travelled up, to brush away the hair that Hadrian had covered his scar with. "This caused you pain in the forest, just looking at me." A finger came down on the lightning bolt.

A shuttering gasp escaped from his mouth as his scar pulsed. Not with pain. No, the opposite. Emerald eyes closed as his back arched. Something inside his body ached with need.

Everything stopped.

Riddle had stepped away, his face neutral as he took in Hadrian's dishevelled appearance. "I need to see more."

Hadrian's tongue swiped his bottom lip. "It's almost curfew, Riddle." He stood up, brushing down his trousers. His nerves felt wobbly and his scar still felt tingly. "This is enough...for tonight."

Cinnamon eyes stared long and hard at him. "I want to see everything, everything you know about me."

Hadrian grimaced, wearily running a hand over his face. "Isn't that what I am doing? I need to rest."

Riddle eventually nodded. He took his cloak off the back of his chair, and gestured for Hadrian to accompany him out. The two of them descended the stairs and into the tunnel, walking into the main body of the Chamber.

Onyx slithered across the polished floor, every so often dipping into the curves where the runes had been etched. He was sliding with

purpose and excitement, having no doubt spent all of this time with Una.

Hadrian stopped to scoop up his familiar, who slithered up his arm and onto his shoulder. Still in silence, they ascended the stairs that Riddle enchanted, climbing up to the girl's bathroom. Myrtle was not there.

The Chamber closed behind them, and they walked out of the bathroom.

An arm barricaded Hadrian's steps. He was about to hiss something angrily at Riddle, when the boy shoved him against the door. Suddenly, lips covered his. Hadrian made a strangled noise at the unexpected action but Riddle pressed in closer. His senses zeroed in on the soft lips pressing urgently against his, moving. The tingle started again in his scar, coaxing his magic forward.

However, Riddle's magic, like an iron wall, slammed against his...trapping his magic in his body. No dance this time. Hadrian's hands gathered in Riddle's shirt, feeling the warmth of his body underneath.

What was happening? He was about to shove Riddle away when a voice sounded to their right.

"Boys?"

Riddle withdrew. His eyes searched Hadrian's for a second before he stepped back. "Professor Dumbledore."

Hadrian felt his cheeks light with the fire of embarrassment. He couldn't meet his old Headmaster's eyes.

"It is almost curfew. The corridors are not the place for...dalliances." Dumbledore paused, adjusting his glasses as his eyes soaked in Riddle's appearance. "Especially near a female lavatory."

"Apologies, Sir."

Hadrian was mortified and he did not know what was worse: the fact Riddle had *kissed* him or the fact Dumbledore had found them. He wiped his mouth with his sleeve.

"Yes, now run along the both of you."

Riddle pulled Hadrian's arm, leading the other Slytherin down the corridor - heading to the stairs.

"What was *that* ?" Hadrian hissed.

"You want Dumbledore suspicious of the Chamber?" Riddle replied through his teeth as the descended one of the moving stairways. "Two boys coming out of the girl's bathrobe where Moaning Myrtle was killed last year?"

He clenched his jaw, pulling out of Riddle's grasp to stalk slightly ahead of him. "You are a piece of work, Riddle." Onyx curled around Hadrian's neck, draping over it like a scarf. His familiar had grown recently, width and lengthways. "Never do that again." He stomped all the way down to the common room, ignoring Riddle who stayed silent all the way down.

Chapter 21

Chapter Notes

Thank you everyone who commented, I hope you like the replies! It has been a tough week to find time to write, so I hope this was not too long of a wait.

I hope you like the direction this is going, and your comments have been amazing. This is my first proper fanfiction I have ever written (tried some DracoxHarry but did not quite work out), so I am always doubting everything.

When I said it was a slow burn, I meant it!

A few comments have stated over the last few chapters they would like to see a Tom POV chapter. It wouldn't quite work now, at this point, and I worry that it will mess up the fixed POV on Hadrian. However, if there is an interest, I will write one.

Well, enjoy this chapter - there are some bit I know you will like! (Well, I hope so!)

MINISTRY OF MAGIC SENDS TROOPS TO EUROPE

Minister of Magic, Leonard Spencer-Moon, has deployed a number of specially trained Aurors to Europe in a mission to finally take down Gellert Grindelwald. The notorious and dangerous Dark wizard has been actively recruiting, under his ideology of 'The Greater Good'. The Minister made a statement last year that Grindelwald's efforts to seek 'war upon the world' was an act of terrorism that needed to be neutralised. The deployment of top-level Aurors will hopefully allow the British public to sleep more peacefully at night. (Turn to Page 3 for more on Grindelwald's timeline of terror) .

Hadrian gave a small snort before he allowed his eyes to look at the moving picture of Gellert Grindelwald, in action of fighting against two men. It was taken in some street. Someone had gotten *very* close just to snap this…

His thoughts tumbled off into nothingness as he watched, hypnotised,

as Grindelwald swished his wand. Elder wood. That was what reports over time had fabled the wand to be made of. And due to its status as a Deathly Hallow, the core a Thestral hair from its tail. Truly a work of Death.

A shudder chased down his spine as he remembered that horrifying entity he had felt after All Hallows Eve.

His thumb brushed over the image. Could it be that this notched wand was the one? Hadrian peered down, seeing the runes etched onto the band above the handle. There was something about it...that was different. During his research of the Hallows, he had come across a report of a Dark wizard called Loxias beaten by another named Arcus. Then it disappeared for a while.

Luckily, the librarian loved his quest for very random and old information. The man had spent a week going through lineage documents pertaining to Arcus - conqueror of Loxias. It turned out Arcus had reported the wand stolen from his property, apparently kicking up a storm with Aurors about it being the most powerful wand in the world. He had openly pinned the blame on a wandmaker called Mykew Gregorovitch, who had visited during that week unexpectedly - even going to The Daily Prophet.

Hadrian had been certain that Gregorovitch was the owner. But this changed everything. This time, no rash decisions. He would have to make sure the wandmaker no longer had it in his possession.

The danger was that if Hadrian's gut feeling was correct, he would have to win the wand. His cloak was firmly in his possession. The next one was the stone, and that would need careful planning. The Gaunts were the owners. Riddle's line - his mother, Merope Gaunt. Riddle had massacred most of them, so in their house somewhere, was the stone. An heirloom with magnificent value.

Emerald eyes flickered to the pensive, where Riddle was still submerged. He sighed, fingers itching to just reach over and try and drown him in the fluid. It wouldn't work, of course, but it would probably make him feel a little satisfied.

He folded the newspaper, making some mental notes on his next moves for the Hallows. It would take time. He had to learn patience, and squash his want to just go and do it.

Hadrian pulled his Arithmancy book over, looking over the symbols and equations. He continued his essay on Curse Breaking.

Half an hour later, Riddle yanked himself free of the pensive.

“What have you *done*?” Riddle hissed, slamming his fist onto the table.

Hadrian arched a dark eyebrow at him. “Relax, Riddle. Your diary - your horcrux - is still intact….for now.”

“Is that a threat?” Those cinnamon eyes seemed to take on a scarlet hue.

His wand was ready on the table, and his fingers hovered near the handle. “No, just the truth. What you saw was forty-odd years in the future.”

Riddle sneered at him before whisking away to his chair. He scooted it to one side, tapping those long and elegant fingers on the table as he glared at the floor.

Hadrian sighed, going back to his Arithmancy homework. His finger skimmed the line that he was using as his reference as he jotted down the next line of his essay. In fact, his *first draft* essay. Hermione had gone on about drafting and its importance, but he had always found something else to do. Who knew that it would take a Malfoy as his tutor to teach him the importance of it?

“You know me as Voldemort.”

Hadrian startled, his quill scratching into the line he had just written. Cursing, he placed the quill down, very glad that it would only end up being a draft. “Yes, I do.”

There was a heavy sigh. “Hadrian, when you answer, answer properly. No with such basic responses.”

He rolled his eyes. “Yes, I know you as Voldemort. What more do you want me to say?”

“You spoke to me through the diary? And that ginger girl?”

Hadrian nodded. “You spoke to Ginny first, lured her into your trap. She had enough of you, so she dumped your diary into a toilet.” He fought back a smile at Riddle’s horrified expression. “I found it abandoned, and your horcrux - your memory - sucked me into the diary to show off how you framed Hagrid. In my naivety, I did not connect the dots. In the future, your actual name is not widely known.

Ginny stole it back, where you controlled her to open the Chamber."

"They know me as Voldemort in the future," Riddle stated, mostly to himself. "I kill your parents, take over your First Year Defense teacher to try and resurrect myself through the Philosopher's Stone…then in your Second Year I come to you as one of my horcruxes. Our fates are quite interwoven with each other. By why you? Why did I go after a child? What makes you special?"

Hadrian looked away from that intense gaze that turned his way. He knew. He knew that it would boil down to a prophecy. The child born as the seventh month dies. For not the first time, Hadrian felt out of his depth and felt doubt whether this was the right way to go about dealing with Tom Riddle.

"Why did you decide to split your soul?" At the silence that followed, Hadrian looked up to see Riddle just staring. "Is that it? You aren't going to tell me?"

Shoulders rose in a slight shrug.

Hadrian shook his head, laughing. "Of course you aren't. But I know why. Your fear of death. You want your immortality." It was his time to shrug. "There are other ways of doing it that don't involve destroying your soul."

"Who else knows…now? In this time?"

"Riddle, you can either answer my questions or this ends here." Hadrian stood up and started to gather his homework and books. "I fulfilled my end of the deal here by showing you the future. You did not state how much."

"*Close*."

Suddenly, the entrance to the library sealed as a stone door slid up from the steps. Hadrian shook his head.

"*Open*."

With a grinding noise, the door sunk back into the floor.

He looked back at Riddle. "Look, you can't fight me with your wand. You can't control me with parseltongue. You need to understand why I have decided to show you these memories." He started to walk out.

“Hadrian.”

He stopped, looking back as he held his books to his chest. Riddle’s eyes were dark, curled hair falling into them as he leant forward in the chair. His elbows rested on his knees. Even from this distance, he could practically see the Heir of Slytherin’s magic curled in, wrapped around Riddle like a serpent.

“Sit.”

Hadrian arched a brow. “No ‘please’?”

Riddle’s upper lip curled. “Do you have to be so obnoxious?”

“It isn’t a hard word to say. A little kindness could go a long way.”

“The same kindness you showed that Unspeakable?”

His face drained of colour. Hadrian grimaced and walked back to his place at the table, dumping his books on the surface.

“How much more is there to show me?”

“You don’t appear in my Third Year…but you do in my Fourth and Fifth.”

Riddle straightened up in his chair, facing the other Slytherin boy. “Tell me more about your relationship with Dumbledore.”

Hadrian stiffened. “No.” He continued before Riddle could interject. “Not until you have seen everything, otherwise things will not make sense. You have seen the conversations that I have had with him.”

“And yet, here, in the past, you have questioned him openly. You defended Dark magic. Is this some kind of plan with him?”

“You think Dumbledore would condone *this*?” Hadrian hissed. “That he would allow me to *kill* a man? In the future, I *am* Dumbledore’s guy. You are…repulsive. You killed my family… You…” He trailed off, fighting back the urge to scream in the future Dark Lord’s face. Here Riddle looked human, just like he had in the diary. But the future Hadrian knew, had Voldemort in it; the noseless, serpentine creature that wreaked destruction upon anyone in his path to total control. “Look at what you become. Is that what you want?”

Riddle clenched his jaw before answering, “No, but now I know not to make the same mistakes.”

His heart thudded against his ribs. “Is this all you are taking from this?”

His full lips curled into a dark smile, eyes glittering. “You had something else in mind, *Hadrian* ?” A long finger tapped on the table as he slowly turned to fully face him. “What did you think would happen? That I would see the error of my ways?”

“You are a piece of work, Riddle.”

“That is what you expected, isn’t it?” Riddle stood and stalked around the table. “You expected to change me.”

Hadrian shot to his feet, taking steps back so that the distance remained between them. “Even if I can’t change you, I have already changed things.”

“And I have changed you.”

Hadrian froze at Riddle’s words. He *had* changed. Harry Potter was the future baby born of the Potters, maybe never to be The-Boy-Who-Lived. Here, he was Hadrian Peverell, the boy from the future who Death had a particular interest in, and had killed a man to save his freedom. His eyes shot up to Riddle, releasing a startled sound when he saw just how close the other boy had gotten.

“*You* have not changed me.”

“No?” Riddle stepped forward, so they were chest to chest. “In the future, my mere presence causes you pain, but look.”

Hadrian’s eyes widened as Riddle released his magic. That seductive darkness was a storm between them as his own magic was pried out of its enclosure. He released a strangled noise as the darkness curled around him, forcing him to tilt his head backwards. Those cinnamon eyes were close, staring deep into him, as if reading his soul. Hadrian felt more naked than he had ever felt before.

A pale hand came to skim Hadrian’s cheek. Riddle’s pupils were blown - the only colour a brown tinged with red in a ring around the black. “Your magic sings to me, Hadrian. Our fates are joined.”

His gaze fell to Riddle’s lips, which hovered over his. Was Riddle going to kiss him again? Hadrian’s brain flitted to the moment yesterday, where they had used a kiss to divert Dumbledore’s attention from the entrance to the Chamber. Where Riddle had used

him.

“No!” Hadrian took a step back, but his magic was too entangled with the other Slytherin’s and pain struck his chest.

He tried to reel back his magic, but it was traitorous, more interested in dancing with Riddle’s. Both of their magic were curled around each other, like a lover’s embrace.

“Do you know what your magic feels like, Hadrian?” Riddle whispered, standing his ground and watching. “Warm, so warm. It feels like the sun on my skin on a warm, summer’s day. There is such purity...but with something richer...something darker which lurks beneath.”

He swallowed. Hard. Riddle’s magic was so dark, so black but there was warmth. That seductive lull that encouraged him to take a step forward. It took every molecule of his existence to withstand the call.

“I seek to kill you in the future you know, but that will never happen.” Hunger struck in those dark eyes. Just like the hunger Tom Riddle had revealed to him in his Second Year. “Something joins us.”

... And the Dark Lord will mark him as his equal, but he will have power that the Dark Lord knows not…

Hadrian knew in his bones that his fate would be forever entwined with Riddle, whether he liked it or not. Whatever the prophecy meant, it was easy to decipher that Riddle was his equal. Whatever ‘power’ he had over the future Dark Lord was yet to show itself.

“I will never be your follower, Riddle. I will never share your corrupted ideology,” Hadrian replied. He had hoped his voice was strong, but the waver was clear.

Riddle smiled. “You want me to learn from my mistakes. You do not want the future you know. Why don’t we make a new deal?”

“I always feel like I am making a deal with the Devil, with you.”

“I will take that as a compliment.” Riddle paused. “You will show me the rest, and answer my questions...honestly. And in return, I will let you question my ‘corrupted ideology’.”

Hadrian bit his bottom lip, unaware that Riddle followed that movement. It was a tantalising offer. To be able to question Riddle’s

methods and challenge them, was an opportunity that no one else would have. Would he be able to make a difference? Surely he had to try. “I don’t want you to make any more horcruxes until you know everything I want you to.”

Riddle chuckled, a dark and rich noise that made Hadrian’s stomach flip. “An extra want. We need to make this *equal,* Hadrian. For your addition to our new agreement, there is something else I want from you.”

Hadrian’s mind fell apart. What could Riddle possibly want from him?

“I want to explore this magic further.”

He blinked. “Fine.”

“*Swear it.*”

Hadrian rolled his eyes. “*I swear.*” He then let out a sound of relief as Riddle started to withdraw his magic. Pulling on his own, it slowly started to untangle.

“We should return, as we have Imbolc preparations to make with the rest of them.” Riddle whisked away back to his place to gather his things when their magic had separated, leaving Hadrian standing there and wondering if he had made the right decision. He rubbed his scar, where instead of the tingle - there was a slight burn.

***

Imbolc was Friday night, and apparently, it was the group’s first time performing it. They were sat in their group of chairs by the fire, Silas having shooed everyone away for the night.

Hadrian had been surprised that they were joined by the Seventh Year Slytherin boys. When had Riddle involved them so heavily? All of their eyes had been full with curiosity as Riddle had entered the common room with Hadrian. All bowed their heads at Riddle.

How had he gotten this loyalty from them all? Was it his magic, charms...torture? Of course, the boy spoke Parseltongue and that was

seen as a gift from Salazar Slytherin.

Initially, there had been a space next to Cassius, but Riddle had told Antonin to take that - freeing up the chair next to Riddle's. There was symbolism in that. Hadrian had noticed a hierarchy to their seating arrangements, especially in lessons, the Great Hall and more so in the common room. Abraxas was always close, always on Riddle's left hand side. Now Hadrian was sitting on the right hand side.

"Knights - you are the future of the wizarding race," Riddle began. "It is vital that this ritual succeeds, especially in the dire times we are in, due to Grindelwald. A number of you have betrothal contracts in place, with good, strong matches. It is important that as we go out into the world outside of Hogwarts, we remember our duty to continue our lines."

Hadrian inwardly shuddered. He was glad that in the future he knew, Voldemort had not seemed to sire a child. Imagine having sex with Voldemort? That pale skin, big crimson eyes and that disgusting snake-face. Imagine that leering over you. His scar tingled.

"Hadrian."

He blinked, looking at Riddle. The Heir of Slytherin was giving him an odd look.

"Can you keep your mind on the ritual?"

Hadrian's stomach flopped. Had he been projecting his thoughts? His cheeks flushed a little. But he had not been making eye contact with Riddle, so it was not legilimens. How? He pushed his questions to one side. "I am," he answered tersely.

There was a sharp, collective intake of breath at the way he spoke back.

Riddle pursed his lips. "I will not punish you this time for your lack of respect, as you are new to our ways." He then switched to parseltongue. "*Whatever you are doing, stop it. I do not want to see such grotesque imagery.*"

"*I wasn't doing anything,*" Hadrian retorted. "*Besides, that grotesque imagery is your future face*." He smirked at the gleam of horror in Riddle's eyes. The other boy was doing a very good job at schooling his expression.

"*Be quiet. It may be an...unwanted side effect of our magic.*"

Hadrian rolled his eyes subtly as he leant back in his wing-backed chair. His cheeks flushed again at the curious and horrified looks from the Slytherins, especially the Seventh Years, who did not really know Hadrian Peverell.

"Those with betrothal contracts, have you managed to acquire your future spouses' hair?"

There was a quick run around of the boys who did. Hadrian was not surprised to see all of the Seventh Years with betrothals lined up, but he was quite surprised to see not just Cassius, but Abraxas and Silas engaging in the discussion. It was only yesterday that he was in bed with Avery, fumbling around until Riddle had rudely entered.

Perhaps Hadrian should take a female to Hogsmeade, if any were interested. He had once found Ginny attractive, so maybe he would still be attracted to other girls. Could he ever be betrothed to anyone? Having children had never occurred to him, having believed he would die at the hands of Voldemort before he got the chance to reach adulthood. He had so much he wanted to do with life, being anchored down by something like a wife or kids seemed counterproductive.

"We have the herbs, candles and altar set up. The chalice?" Riddle asked, voice silky and smooth.

"I have aquired that, my Lord," Dorian answered.

"Good work." The fire cast shadows over Riddle's face. "And are we familiar with the wording?"

There was a chorus of agreement. Hadrian just nodded along, but he had not gotten around to looking at it. There had been too much to deal with, with Croaker and setting up his memories for Riddle.

Onyx came across the floor, causing a few to draw their legs up. The snake slithered up Hadrian's chair, giving him a lick to the hand as he moved to curl up in his Master's lap. Onyx had definitely grown in size. His body was almost as thick than Hadrian's fist, and seemed to be growing by the day. He was lengthening too, almost three feet now. Markings had appeared on his spine too - a rainbow-like sheen that when it caught the light glittered like jewels. A scitalis. Very rare and dangerous. It was likely the shopkeeper had not known what they were selling to Avery. When Dumbledore had seen Onyx, the snake would have appeared just as a normal, baby snake.

Now, Hadrian had housed Onyx mostly in the Chamber or in the dormitory. His days of eaves-dropping on Riddle were over - not that the snake did any of that. All Onyx ever fed back to him were tales of his beautiful Una's yellow eyes were.

His fingers ran over Onyx's scales on his head and down his spine, as he watched the meeting. More than one of the boys had cast uncertain eyes in his direction, reminding him of Justin Finch-Fletchley's reaction to his use of Parseltongue.

Twenty minutes later, everyone was excused.

"*Hadrian, stay*."

He shot Riddle an annoyed look. "*You have had me in the Chamber since dinner and now this meeting. I am tired.*"

A few of the boys had slowed their movements, taking in the hissed and private conversation between the two powerful wizards. That was until Riddle gave them a pointed look.

"Yo*u need to pay more attention in these meetings*."

Hadrian raised an eyebrow. "*Why? They are quite boring*."

Riddle grinned. "*Need a bit of torture to liven it up*? *We could always Crucio someone, or find some stupid Gryffindor.* "

He rolled his eyes and stood. "*No. No torture. I will try and listen more.*" With Onyx in his arms, he headed to the door to the dormitories. "*Goodnight Riddle*." He left, but swore he heard a muttered '*Goodnight* ' back.

Chapter 22

Chapter Notes

> Thank you for your amazing comments - I am so glad you loved the dynamic between Tom and Harry in the last chapter.
>
> Enjoy this, and let me know what you think!

A cacophony of sounds and smells rose in the Great Hall as the student body poured in for breakfast. Above, the enchanted ceiling mirrored the sky outside, only streaks of cirrus clouds interrupting the never-ending blue. The sun was pale in the dying February, but the warmth clearly had a positive effect on the teenagers. Everyone was chirpy, chatting animatedly whilst they ate their various breakfasts.

Hadrian bit into a buttered crumpet, eyes flitting to Abraxas who took the space opposite him. He gave a nod before resuming his gaze to The Daily Prophet. There were no more pictures of Grindelwald, just the Minister with a serious expression - a grim warning to Grindelwald that the United Kingdom would take down the megalomaniac.

“Remember we have Astronomy tonight,” Abraxas said lightly, as he spread a layer of glossy orange marmalade on his slice of toast.

Hadrian’s head rose. “Yes, I know. Why?”

The other boy gave a light shrug, next pouring himself some tea. “You and Tom are disappearing a lot in the evenings. I just thought I would remind you.”

Before Hadrian could even think of a reply, they were joined by all of the other Slytherin Sixth Year boys. He watched as Avery was directed to sit beside Abraxas, rather than his usual spot next to him. Cassius gave him a slight frown before he busied himself with breakfast. Instead, Riddle slid in next to him, with Silas on the other side. Sandwiched in by probably the most dangerous Slytherins in the school. But, then again, had Lestrange actually killed anyone at this point? He doubted it.

Hadrian had very much earned his place in Slytherin, even if Riddle was the only one who knew what he had done.

A leg brushed against his. He jolted, aware of his magic rising at the

touch. "*Can you move up*?" he hissed at Riddle.

"*Why*?"

"*You are in my space.*"Hadrian glanced at their Slytherin friends who were not openly watching, but were not engaging in conversations amongst themselves.

Riddle was about to reply when there was a tapping at the front of the Hall. Everyone's attention turned to the front, where Dippet stood at the lectern. The Headmaster cleared his throat, ending the last few conversations in the Hall.

"Good morning, students. We are nearing the end of February, and as many of you are aware, Professor Beery has been directing one of the most famous tales of our time, '*The Fountain of Fair Fortune*' with our student body." Dippet paused, allowing a smattering of applause. None from the Slytherin table. "He has asked me to remind you all, that the play will be performed after Imbolc - the first weekday of the old calendar. This will take place Monday afternoon, in which *all* of your *compulsory* attendance will be required, taking place during your regular afternoon session. A great deal of time and effort has gone into the production, and Professor Beery has assured me it will be a performance that will go down in Hogwarts' History. Enjoy this glorious, sunny day."

Hadrian watched as Dippet left the lectern. There had never been any plays performed in his time at Hogwarts. Had he ever watched one? Back in Primary school, each year there was a production of some kind of tale but he had never been part of one. Only the compulsory Year Three Nativity where he had played a donkey. That had been the year Lucy Sawyer had dropped baby Jesus on the stage and the angel Gabriel had stepped on its plastic head.

"I heard that Jean Cattermole has been seen disappearing into a broom cupboard with that Ravenclaw playing Sir Luckless," Dorian muttered, after he took a swig of his pumpkin juice.

"I thought he was with Orla Creevey?" Antonin said.

Dorian grinned. "He is."

Silas made a disgusted noise. "How? He looks like his mother slept with a toad."

"Actors." Cassius shrugged. "Women love them."

Hadrian saw that Riddle had made some distance between them, although his magic was aware the other boy was close. His skin was prickling with the restlessness of his core. Emerald eyes flickered up as the owls swooped in from the enchanted sky. A number dropped packages and letters off to students. No doubt little presents of sweets, or messages of love or despair from home.

He picked up his glass of pumpkin juice, only to jump when a creamy envelope landed in front of him, narrowly missing his other buttered crumpet.

Who would send him a letter? His mind immediately jumped to multiple conclusions: a late letter from Croaker explaining that he had set Hadrian up; Fleamont Potter demanding his Cloak back after remembering Hadrian's face and tracking him down as a student -

Hadrian quickly cut his thoughts off, as they descended into an anxious mess. He ripped it open along the top, feeling a bit more confident as he heard Riddle speaking to Abraxas about Astronomy. At least he would not be looking.

Pulling the thick parchment out, his stomach dropped out of his body.

Hadrian Peverell,

Our paths will cross soon. I have heard such interesting things.

Gellert Grindelwald

He swiftly folded the parchment and placed it into his pocket. His hands trembled. It entirely took his plan and ripped it to shreds. Hadrian had bargained on the next year, maybe the year after, of being strong enough to make some kind of play against Grindelwald.

It had to be before Dumbledore's defeat of the dark wizard. 1945. Less than two years off.

But this was all wrong. Grindelwald could not make the first move. Who had told Grindelwald about him? It could be any source in the school. And what had they relayed? The made up story of how Grindelwald had hunted down his 'mother' and killed her? Or just the weight of his borrowed name. Dippet's stupid cover story.

“Hadrian?”

“Huh?” His head snapped up.

“Have you finished that Arithmancy essay due tomorrow?” Abraxas asked.

Hadrian blinked. “I think...wait…” He stood up. “I need some air, sorry.” His breakfast was forgotten as he rushed out of the Hall, through the Entrance Hall and outside where he breathed in the chilled air.

His eyes stung as he shoved his hands in his cloak pockets and strode down towards the lake. Now he had two megalomaniacs on his tail and nowhere to hide. Grindelwald was more of a formed danger. Riddle, he felt he could handle at the moment.

Frustration caused him to kick a pebble down the dirt track. Life was just never simple for Hadrian Peverell or Harry Potter.

Half an hour later, he stomped back to the castle, already late for Potions. He grumbled an excuse about feeling sick to Slughorn, who gave him a half-hearted warning. Not feeling up to any socialising or explaining his disappearance over breakfast, he took a workbench nearest to the door and furthest from his housemates. The letter felt like a horrible weight in his pocket.

What potion was he even making?

The instructions blurred, and didn't make any sense.

Hadrian dropped a clutch of ashwinder’s eggs into his cauldron, only seeing at the last moment he was only supposed to add two.

There was a flash of red and the sound of cracking, before his world instantly descended into darkness.

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The river was dark, so dark that there was no visible life. With the strengthening of the wind, the small, wooden bridge creaked and groaned as if making every effort to not get blown away into the void of its surroundings.

There was nothing but the bridge and river.

Hadrian took one step on the bridge, his hand darting out to grasp one of the sides. The wood splintered in his hand, tiny fragments burrowing into his skin like parasites. There was no pain. He withdrew his hand and watched rivlets of blood run down to chase along the length of his arm.

Where was he?

He looked, but there was nothing around. Not even darkness. Just the bridge and the river.

Something flickered on the bridge. Three shadows, walking in front of him, to cross to the other side. Suddenly, they vanished and something much larger stood in the middle of the bridge. It seemed to hover between being corporeal one moment, and then not, the next. A mass of darkness, no visible shape.

"Are you afraid to cross?" The voice was like the grinding of bones. Raw.

Hadrian placed his hand back on the wooden railing of the bridge, noting that it had changed. It was carved into a twisted design. This time, there were no splinters. "No, I am not afraid to cross."

The darkness flickered. "You fear the other side of this crossing."

Hadrian swallowed. "What is on the other side?"

"You know." The sound that followed could have been laughter, but it sounded like broken glass.

He stared beyond the figure, and he saw nothingness. "It does not scare me." He took one step forward. The wood creaked underfoot.

"No? The unknown scares each and every mortal."

Another step...then another...until he was in the middle of the bridge, right in front of the shadow.

Something brushed against his forehead. Hadrian gasped as he was hit by a feeling for the first time, a deep chill that shot straight to his bones and set them on fire. His hand shot out to the rail, but it had disappeared. So had the bridge. Instead he stumbled slightly before righting himself.

"You have been touched by me, but survived...just like your ancestor," said the being. "But something clings to you that does not belong in your new existence." It flashed in and out of corporeality. "You have seen such

death, Harry. Why do you not fear the other side?"

Hadrian straightened his back and looked at the dark mass. "I have more important things to fear."

The sound of broken glass once more. "More important than me?"

He frowned. "I have responsibilities here…the opportunity to change things. To protect my loved ones, friends and family. The only thing I fear from you, is that you take me before I am done."

"No one is ever 'done', Harry Potter."

"I know." He sighed. "But I want to do enough. I do not fear you, because my life has always been set out for me. I know I will die. The challenges given to me are too great to survive. Maybe then I will be free."

"Freedom? In my embrace?" There was a long silence, where it faded in and out before disappearing completely. In its place was a door.

Hadrian took the handle and then tumbled into darkness.

***

His bare feet splashed in shallow puddles. He was indoors somewhere, but without a wand, he could not light his way. Fumbling around, he finally managed to feel a wall and walk, hugging the brickwork.

There was no pain as his foot crashed against something concrete. Stairs. He crawled up them, until he reached a door. It easily pushed open, and a dull light exposed this new room. It was an old living room but trashed. The sofas were torn and dusty, pushed against the sides of the room. A rug was rolled up, and dumped next to a barren fireplace.

A lightbulb was swaying above a chair in the centre of the room. Under it, was a chair and someone was strapped to it.

Hadrian looked down to see that there were more puddles here in the living room. His bare feet and the edges of his grey trousers were covered with blood.

"Ready to take the offer, boy?" Croaker's face lolled in his direction. That stupid grin was back on his face, despite being tied up.

“You are dead.”

The Unspeakable laughed. “We will give you a nice room. A view. A visitor or two.” Blood seeped from his ears and dripped onto the floor. As his face hit the light, Hadrian could see that some of the man’s flesh had started to fall away from the bone, his under eyes skin sagging to reveal stark white bone underneath.

“We will just poke and prod you a little.” Croaker cackled, throwing his head back. Some of the man’s teeth were missing, leaving dark holes.

“You are dead,” Hadrian repeated.

“Oh yes. Dead.” The man’s head lolled back, eyes rolling a little like pendulums. “How did it feel?”

Energy abruptly filled the room. Hadrian’s body exploded with sensation - hot and bright and beautiful. Everything was tinged green now.

“Did it make you feel alive?” Croaker rasped.

His eyes returned to the Unspeakable, whose flesh had taken on a grey tinge against the emerald glow. Part of his left cheek had begun to peel off, hanging off his cheekbone.

“We could have given you a room. A cupboard maybe,” Croaker uttered, that skin flapping with each word.

Hadrian cried out as arms seized him on either side. “No!” he screamed.

The two faceless guards dragged him across the wet floor, across the living room to the staircase, where there was a small door.

“No, please, no!” Hadrian begged.

He was thrown inside the small space and the door slammed behind him. Drawing in deep, gulping breaths he scrambled backwards and his spine hit shelves. Something hit the ground and he knew it was his disfigured army men.

There was movement outside the cupboard. Hadrian bent down and peered through the keyhole. In the living room stood Vernon, Petunia, Dudley and Croaker. They stood facing the cupboard door in a row and in unison, tilted their heads back and started to laugh.

***

What was that awful noise?

No air...no feelings…

Screaming...hands, hands holding him?

Hadrian came to. His throat was hoarse and exploded with pain as a scream exploded out of him again. He could see the faces of the Dursleys and Croaker. They were pinning him down.

“Let me go!” he yelled, though it barely came out in a rasp.

Voices. Different from the Dursleys or Croaker. He looked around and he was no longer in the living room. Everything was all stone and white. A familiar face hovered in his vision. Healer Roberts.

“Hadrian?”

He allowed himself to be pushed back against his pillow. Everything refocused. Reality. He swallowed, not wanting to close his eyes in case he was transported into the awful dreamscape he was just in.

“Hadrian.” Healer Roberts appeared in his line of vision once more. “You are at Hogwarts, in the Hospital Wing. Can you remember what happened to you?”

His brow furrowed. “Breakfast?”

Roberts gave one laugh though his expression was still serious. “Potions, Mr Peverell. Some incorrectly added ingredients at the wrong time.” He sniffed, before helping Hadrian sit up, adding another pillow behind his shoulders and neck. “You had a few head injuries. I just need to perform a few tests.”

Hadrian blearily just watched as Roberts waved his wand and did his various tests. His head thumped slightly. When he closed his eyes, fingers clicked, jolting them open once more.

“No sleeping yet, Mr Peverell. It is good to keep awake for a while.” Healer Roberts started to jolt some things down on his parchment. “I need to go over a few more things in my Office and we need to keep you in for monitoring.”

He tried to move, but pain shot through his head. “I don’t want to sleep again.”

Soft, brown eyes looked at him thoughtfully. “Bad dreams?”

Hadrian looked away, trying not to think about where his brain had taken him. However, it was in vain. He was drawn back to that river, with the dark entity - Death. Had it been real? Could Death really visit him inside his dreams, or was it some kind of horrible subconscious fear? Either way, it was terrifying. He couldn’t banish that bone-on-bone sound of its voice. If it had been real, he had to move fast with his plans, just in case the Being became too curious about Hadrian’s existence and decided to get rid of him.

“Well, you have been asleep for a day.” Healer Roberts pocketed his wand. “I would advise that you keep awake so we can monitor your pain levels. You had a nasty gash on the back of your skull I managed to heal, but your time unconscious does concern me.”

Hadrian grimaced. Tomorrow was Imbolc, and he was curious about the ritual, especially after the Samhain one. No doubt Riddle would also be pissed that Hadrian had kept him waiting for his next memory of the future. “If I am alright, can I leave tonight?”

“No. Tomorrow morning will be the earliest opportunity for you to leave.” Croaker took the floating parchment in his hand. “There is another thing I was actually meaning to go through with you. In my diagnostics of you, there seems to be some residual dark magic around your curse scar. Are you aware of this?”

His emerald eyes fixed onto the Healer. “Headmaster Dippet knows about that,” he replied.

“I was wondering-”

“No.” Hadrian closed his eyes and sunk back into the pillow. “I will not be prodded. Nothing can be done. Speak to Dippet.”

Roberts drew in a slight breath before turning and walking across the Medical Wing to his Office.

Hadrian bathed in the silence. When he opened his eyes, he saw that he was the only patient. He shifted up on the pillows, wincing at the shards of pain lodged in the back of his skull. His fingers drifted over the area but he did not dare touch it. A head injury. All because of his negligence and his inability to deal with his emotions in a healthier

way. But how did someone ‘deal’ with the idea that a different Dark wizard (Lord?) was now targeting him? Dealing with both Tom Riddle and Gellert Grindelwald would be impossible. What he needed was to make sure that it was Grindelwald who had the item he wanted.

An hour passed of Hadrian mulling over his current predicament, before the door to the Hospital Wing opened and a familiar blonde strode in like he owned the place. Abraxas held a small pile of books under his arm.

“You are awake,” Malfoy stated as he walked over; a small smile touched the corner of his mouth.

“Barely,” Hadrian grumbled.

“I thought Healer Roberts would probably keep you in for a while, because of your head injury. It was pretty grim to look at.” Abraxas pulled up a chair. “Tom had the idea to put pressure on the wound, as you were pouring blood, whilst waiting for help. Though you may owe him a new scarf.”

Hadrian blinked as his brain stopped. Riddle used his scarf to stem the flow? Of course, the Slytherin wouldn’t want Hadrian dying on him when he had important information that was ‘owed’.

“Slughorn was next to useless, but you know him.” Pale fingers skimmed the books on his lap. “You missed a bit of work, so I brought it here for you.”

“Great. Thanks.” Hadrian moved, but he hissed at the thunder strike of pain. He fell back against the pillows.

“Just rest,” Abraxas said softly. “You seemed a bit out of sorts yesterday morning. Was something delivered to you? A message from a family member?”

He chewed on his bottom lip before his eyes darted around, trying to see where his clothes were. “My cloak? Where is it?”

“Tom put your clothes in the dormitory.”

His stomach flipped, brain short-circuiting. Riddle was not an idiot. He would have logged that Hadrian had a letter delivered, and whatever it was - had spurred Hadrian to be an idiot. Now, he had to deal with the potential of Riddle knowing he had received a letter from Grindelwald.

“Do you want me to leave?”

He looked at Abraxas, forcing his breathing to regulate. “No, sorry.”

Healer Roberts swept out of his office, holding a potion in his hand. He cast a look at Abraxas before uncorking the vial and handing it to Hadrian. “This should reduce the pain, but it may make you tired. Mr Malfoy, if you could keep him distracted until lunch time, that should suffice. I understand you are on a free period?”

“Yes, Sir.” Abraxas opened a textbook. “So, Hadrian, let me catch you up on Arithmancy.”

Hadrian gulped down the bitter potion, before handing back the vial to Roberts, who took his leave once more. “Arithmancy, really? Do you want me to fall asleep?”

Malfoy arched an eyebrow up at him. “What do you suggest?”

“Wizard’s chess?”

Abraxas closed the book with a smack. “Fine, but you will regret it”

Chapter 23

Chapter Notes

> Went on a writing spree today! Enjoy a very early chapter, as I have a busy week ahead!
>
> Let me know what you think, as your lovely comments do help!

Tendrils of the moonlight crept through the thick bodies of the trees, outlining twisted silhouettes. There was a layer of mist along the floor of the forest, almost like ghostly embers or low-hanging smoke. It was exactly how it had looked during his detention during his First Year. In fact, if he concentrated hard enough, he could still hear Fang's whines and snorts, alongside Draco Malfoy's moaning about the unfairness of the situation.

He wrapped his scarf tighter around his neck, burying his chin within its emerald folds. It no longer smelt of Cassius, and part of him was glad. He was not in the mood to be a prisoner of his hormones.

His fingers fluttered up to his head, which was pretty much healed, after another night spent under observation. Healer Roberts had let him go after dinner, after he had seen Hadrian eat all of his food and demonstrate no pain. There were twinges of pain when he moved his neck too much, but that was it.

There were voices in the distance and a flicker of light ahead. Abraxas had filled him in on the location, in case he could make it. The youngest Malfoy was also the only visitor he had in the two days. Whenever he enquired about anyone else, Abraxas would change the subject. It had grated on his nerves, but he knew what was in the way, or *who* was in the way - Riddle.

The limbs of the trees jutted out of the fleshy soil, almost as if they were trying to claw their way out of the dirt and escape. A howl floated up in the night sky, but it was followed by silence. It was always silent. A silence that was completely unnatural in a place that should be infested with life.

Hadrian could see people moving ahead - with a fire lit. Someone bent down to poke at the base, causing the flames to flare, before rejoining the circle that was forming of the Slytherins. As he approached, he was surprised to see a few of the girls there as well - Adelia

Greengrass, Druella Lazenby and Slyvia Selwyn.

His eyes immediately connected with Riddle's. The other boy's face was utterly passive, although his eyes glowed red in the fire.

"Hadrian!" Adelia's face lit up as she saw him enter the small clearing. She walked over and gave him a hug. The girl was soft, her curves pressing into him and the smell of raspberries floated up into his nose.

"Hello, Adelia," he replied, a small smile touching his mouth as he drew away. He had never been a hugging kind of person. Hermione had given him a few over time, but they were very rare also. That, combined with growing up with little to no physical contact with the Dursleys, made him self-conscious. Cassius was the only person he felt comfortable touching.

"How is your head? It looked so bad, I thought I would faint," Adelia asked.

"Fine." He looked up at the circle of people, who were gathered around a makeshift altar made of twigs and sticks - a silver chalice floating above it. There were a range of red and white flowers - freshly gathered by the look of them - laid at the base of the altar. Candles floated in the air, all around - just like they did in the Great Hall.

Adelia took his arm, and led him over to the circle. This time, Riddle did not direct him to stand anywhere in particular but he felt his heavy gaze upon him. Adelia took his hand on one side, and Abraxas the other.

Once more, it felt odd to have people's hands in his - so warm and soft.

Luckily, Abraxas had spent time yesterday also guiding him through the chant needed for the ritual, as well as what to expect. He was grateful to the boy. It made him wonder a lot whether things could ever have been different between Draco and him. He offered a smile to Abraxas when those cool blue eyes slid his way, and the Slytherin gave a small nod back.

"Fire Goddess - Brighid, daughter of Dagda - we have gathered here to bask in your glory," Riddle began.

"*Today is Imbolc - midwinter - and the frost has begun to thaw*," everyone

said in unison. "*The days grow longer once more as your womb births fire unto the lands, fire to chase away the darkness.*"

Hadrian felt his core bloom inside of him, and just managed to keep focused enough to reign it in as much as he could. There could not be a repeat of their last ritual. He watched as Slyvia broke the circle to walk over to the thick, crimson candle underneath the floating chalice. When she returned, the chant continued:

"*As the sacred flame is lit, our Goddess returns to our Earth and to our homes to bless us with her life*." His hands sparked as he felt the chorus of their magic start to sing between their bodies, moving like a summer breeze through them. "*Bless us, bless us with your power of birth and fertility as the Earth grows with your life. Imbolc is the season of new life, and a season to celebrate your nurturing warmth, although forever you remain in our hearts*."

Hadrian's breath caught in the back of his throat as he felt warm spread across his cheek, like a mother's soft caress. A mother's touch that he seemed to remember from when he was a baby, of laughter and warmth...and love. His eyes stung, half expecting to see the mother he had only seen in pictures or in the Mirror of Erised.

His magic fluttered. Not the storm of magic like Samhain, but much softer. It felt like home.

Their hands untangled one by one as a goblet was passed along the circle. When it came to Hadrian, he looked briefly into its milky depths before holding it up the moon. He then took a small sip, before handing it over to Abraxas.

When it ended up back in Riddle's hands, he offered the chalice to the moon, saying: "May Brighid give us her blessings." He took a sip and then placed it on the floor at his feet. "We now offer her warmth, as her children."

Slyvia was first, breaking the circle to light a smaller candle with her wand that circled around the larger, red candle. "As your child, I share my warmth. Bless my family with the warmth of your embrace, and your power of life."

One by one, the blessing was repeated as each Slytherin in turn lit a candle. Hadrian did not use his wand, cupping the wick in his palm to ignite the candle before uttering his blessing. Of course, he wasn't expecting any children and neither did he particularly want any but he understood that it was also to share his magic in the blessings, to

aid his classmates and their families.

After all the candles were lit, they all stood there holding hands, and silently watched the candles flicker and burn. Magic imbued the air, and Hadrian gaze flickered to movements in the forest around them. His throat dried as he saw all manner of creatures approach, but not with malice. Instead, they seemed to be bathing in the magic. A group of centaurs had knelt down, faces upturned to the moon. A glimmer of silver in his peripheral vision revealed a family of unicorns behind Adelia. But what got his attention was a thestral. A single one, which stood behind Riddle and stared at Hadrian.

It made him wonder how many of the Slytherins around him would be able to see it, how many of them would have seen death in the midst of the two wars - muggle and wizard.

Despite the coldness of the air, his body felt warm and he allowed himself just to bask in the magic and embrace of the Goddess in which they had summoned. Then, a long time later, when the moon was high in the sky, they started to disband and drift back to the castle - seeking out their beds.

***

The smell of chocolate and sugar invaded his senses as he emerged inside Honeydukes. It was devoid of customers, as it was dead on opening time. He peered around a stack of barrels, seeing the shop owner disappearing into his office space behind the counter. Making his move, Hadrian swept through the shop and out of the door.

He apparated on the spot.

When he reappeared, his stomach lurched and he instantly vomited all over the cobblestones and the wall. Hadrian wiped his mouth on his sleeve, as his hand was shaking too much, before checking over his body. What he had just done was highly illegal. Apparating with no license and no doubt breaking some International Laws also. But this was important.

He grimaced at the puddle of bile, although was pleased to feel that his magic had withstood the travel needed. Abraxas had been more than happy to talk to him about Gregovoritch - the famous

wandmaker - whilst he had been bedbound. Malfoy had made another stop at his bedside in the evening after lessons, whilst he was in the Hospital Wing. Apparently, Abraxas' father had his wand from Gregovoritch's shop in Sophia, which was hidden away in the Bulgarian-equivalent of Diagon Alley. He was one of the only European wandmakers that rivalled Olivander. According to Abraxas, the Bulgarian was trading again in his old place.

Hadrian was glad he had appeared in a side-alley, away from view. He vanished the pile of vomit before emerging onto the street. There were flurries of wizards and witches about the square already, but he had to remind himself that it was two hours ahead.

He took a look around the shop fronts, stopping by a Quidditch shop that had a new broom on display. His magic still felt warm and strong after the Imbolc ritual last night. None of them had really spoken after the event, deciding to go to bed straight away. Hadrian had gotten up very early, made a trip to the house elves' kitchen - where they had all been been shocked and horrified. However, with a few words, they had been stumbling over themselves to feed him. Then he made his way to Hogsmeade.

Gregovoritch's shop was tucked away in a private alleyway just off the square, next to a large bookshop, that was not hard to track down.

He walked up to the dark wandmaker's. The outside was very grim, all dark - almost charred looked - wooden exterior and blacked out windows. He cast a quick glamour on his scar before going to the door and letting himself inside.

It was dimly lit, a few candles scattered around shelves but no natural light. A few wands were on display in glass cases, more ornately designed than he had ever seen in Ollivanders. There was no one else in the shop, and he used the time to check out the selection. One in particular caught his eye, the handle of the wand carved into something that resembled a rapier.

A voice broke his thoughts, as a man appeared behind the counter.

"English?" Hadrian asked. His eyes scanned the white haired man.

"Yes," came the curt reply. "What brings an English boy to my shop?" His eyes could have been any colour, but they were shadowed in the lightning. However, the silver-white hair gleamed, left scraggly over his shoulders where it appeared to merge with a full, busy beard.

“I have come looking for a wand.”

“I have a selection.”

“No, a particular wand.” Hadrian faced the older man, resting his hip against the side of the tall cabinet that held the rapier-wand.

Gregorovitch let out a gruff scoff. “I sell only wand that suits you. You are too old for first wand,” he replied in broken English.

“I am after the Elder Wand.”

Silence stretched between them. The wandmaker’s face flushed, his mouth twisting.

“Get out of my shop.”

Hadrian tilted his head to the side. “No. Not until I have the information I need. Grindelwald has it, doesn’t he?”

Gregorovitch sneered. “Do not dare say that name in my shop.”

“I just did. Look, I saw a picture of him with what I presumed to be the Elder Wand,” Hadrian explained. “Last I heard, you had it.”

“The Elder Wand is mere fairytale, little boy.”

He gave a tight smile. “Deny it all you want, but I know the truth. All I need is confirmation that Grindelwald has it.”

The look he received was piercing. “What do you want with it?”

Hadrian just looked back. “I want to be the Master of Death.”

This time, Gregorovitch threw his head back and laughed. There was a brittle quality to it. “Go home, little boy. How many have tried and failed? Let me save you the journey.”

“I have one already.” Hadrian remained impassive.

His words caused the humour to drop from the wandmaker’s face. “You lie.”

“No, I do have it, I assure you. A cloak to protect against Death…ever-lasting, rumoured to be cut from Death’s robes. It even deflects some spells but it is generally good for sneaking. The same Cloak has been passed through my family for generations.” He paused to tap his

finger against the glass of the display case. “And, I have a suspicion about where I can find the last one. The Stone.

Gregorovitch hissed through his teeth. “It does not matter. Grindelwald is too powerful for you to take the Elder Wand.”

Hadrian smiled. Bingo. “No one is too powerful.” He paused. “How did he get it off you? A duel?”

“He stole it from me, whilst I slept.”

His eyebrows flew up. “You allowed that to happen?” He did not listen to the man’s interjections, but simply reviewed over the information he knew about the wand. “Wait - he did not disarm you? But he wields its power with success.” He paced down to the blacked out window. “Which means to steal the wand, still classes as a defeat...in the wand’s view...he overpowered you by leaving your wandless.”

Gregorovitch gripped the counter. “Who *are* you?”

“It does not matter. I know he has the wand now.” Hadrian turned on his heel. “Goodbye, Gregorovitch.”

“Wait!”

Hadrian paused but did not reply. He could have left at that moment, but there was something about the way the wandmaker uttered the word.

“That man stole something from me. I wish for revenge.”

He turned.

Gregorovitch was standing at the counter, looking unsure of himself.

Hadrian tilted his head to the side. “If you wish for revenge, then you could help me further.” That got the man’s attention, those shadowed eyes widening. “You experimented on the Elder Wand, of course you did. You know its power. I want to explore it when I get it, but I tire of a wand. It seems odd to put all your efforts into it, especially such a vulnerable thing. Could you point me in the direction of exploring wandless magic at a higher level?”

“The Elder Wand could help you reach those heights.”

His mouth twisted in a dark smile. “And if the wand is destroyed, a

wizard is rendered useless?"

"The Elder Wand can heal other wands."

Hadrian stored that information away. "So, you are saying that wandless magic will never reach the heights that the Elder Wand could take you?"

Gregorovitch frowned and a hand came up to stroke his bushy beard. "Old magic could take you there, but it is strictly forbidden. Ritual magic, blood magic...the like."

He hummed. "Thank you, Gregorovitch." Hadrian winked. "I will let you know how I get on." With that, he turned once more and left the shop.

Not wanting to spend more time than was necessary in Bulgaria, he took himself to the end of the alley and apparated back to Hogsmeade. He vomited once he appeared at the back of the Shrieking Shack. This time, his head swam a little and he needed to sit down in the overgrown grass to get his bearings. The sun had made its way out of the grey clouds, and he turned his face up to its rays and basked in the warmth. It just proved that he needed to practice his long distance apparition more. No doubt he would get many opportunities if Grindelwald really wanted to hunt him down.

Hadrian put his hands in his cloak pockets, gathering it together to shield his body against the chilly breeze. His pockets were empty. The note from Grindelwald - gone.

Half an hour later, he made his way back to Hogwarts through the Honeydukes passage, so he could avoid the signing in/out register they usually kept. In the space of a few months at Hogwarts, he had probably broken as many rules as he did in the *years* he had spent in the future school. Most of his recent 'rule breaking' was more serious than he could have ever imagined. But part of him questioned the wrongness of the death of Croaker. The Unspeakable was going to lock Hadrian away, for something he had no control over. It was not as if he had begged Hogwarts to send him back to the past. Also, had Dumbledore not trained him or was training him to *kill* Voldemort? Voldemort would never drop down dead all by himself. The blood would be on Harry's hands. No one else's.

Back in the castle, he headed for the bathroom to clean his face and gargle some water before heading to the common room to rest for a while. What he was not expecting, was to see Lestrange there, sitting

by himself looking utterly bored with a book in his hands.

His dark gaze flickered to Hadrian as he entered. “Hadrian! We looked all over for you.”

Hadrian’s eyebrows rose. “You did? I was just walking the grounds.” He scratched his head. “I just couldn’t sleep. I had a lot of it the last few days.”

Lestrange stared at him before closing the book, placing it on his lap. “Professor Slughorn wants to see you in his office.” He stood up and closed the distance between them. “He is going to make you an offer. It is an important offer…so do not refuse it. A lot of us have the advantage of wealthy families and careers mapped out for us.” His voice lowered, words only for Hadrian’s ears.

“What offer?”

“Attending a function, with some very important people. Look, I am telling you this because I have felt your magic…your power. I put in a word to Slughorn, and he values the influence my family has. Just don’t tell Tom that I was the one who suggested you. He will kill me. I don’t think he wants you to go.”

He frowned. “Thanks, Silas. I won’t say a word, but why does Tom not want me to go?”

Silas sighed. “I don’t know. He has been acting strange since you had that injury.” He paused, worrying his bottom lip through his teeth. “This is not my place either, but you have been a good influence on Tom. He likes you. Just, he won’t admit that.”

Hadrian scoffed quietly. “Tom does not like people.”

“I have known him for almost seven years now. He respects you.” Silas patted him on the shoulder before leaving the common room.

He pressed his fingers into his eyeballs, so glad he did not have to bother with his glasses any longer. Off to see Slughorn he goes…

Chapter 24

Chapter Notes

> Sorry this is so late, I have been so busy. But I think this should be worth the wait...hopefully!
>
> Thank you for all your lovely comments!

He should have seen it coming. Riddle cornered him after breakfast as everyone else left to finish their studies or relax after another busy week. A hand had slid under his elbow, drawing him over to the side of the steady stream of pupils leaving the Great Hall.

“Let’s go,” Riddle said, releasing his limb to start walking down the corridor towards the staircases.

Hadrian frowned. He had been planning to head to the Chamber to do some research anyway, but he had not quite got his mind focused on drawing out any more memories for Riddle to explore. Tugging a hand through his haphazard hair, he followed after the tall and willowy figure.

Yesterday, he had met with Slughorn. It had been a quick meeting; Slughorn invited him to a Ministry function. The man had told him that it would be good for orphans such as himself to mingle with great minds, to see what careers were on offer, but also to start making connections. When asked who else was attending, Slughorn revealed that he would only be taking Tom Riddle and him. He had permission from Dippet. Silas’ words had mulled over in his head for a while, until he confirmed that he would go.

When he joined Riddle on the moving staircase, he looked up at the other boy’s pale face. It was turned forward, expressionless. “Thank you.”

Cinnamon eyes widened fractionally, but enough for him to see it. “What are you talking about?”

“My head.” His fingers fluttered up to the back of his skull, where no pain lingered anymore. “Abraxas said you stopped the blood. I owe you a scarf.”

Riddle was quiet for a long moment, before the staircase connected

and they moved up. “I could not have you impaired. Otherwise, you could not uphold your end of our deal.”

Despite knowing that this would be the answer, something inside of him sank. What did he expect Riddle to say? That he just wanted to save Hadrian because he was...Hadrian? No, he was a key to Riddle’s future.

They continued their silence to the Second Floor Girl’s toilets, where Myrtle looked once at Riddle, screamed and then threw herself down a toilet with a splash. Riddle summoned the stairs, once the entrance was open and they descended down.

There was no summoning of Una or Onyx (who were often inseparable now) and Hadrian got the message that it was strictly business straight away. They strode up to Salazar’s library and Riddle gestured to the chair that Hadrian usually frequented when down here. Hadrian felt his eyes harden and his lip press into a straight line, not liking to be ordered about - but one glance at Riddle’s face revealed that the other boy was furious about something.

With a sigh, Hadrian removed his cloak, hanging it on the back of his chair, before sitting down. “What is it?”

Riddle walked over. “Do not move.”

Then, before he could react, there were fingers in his hair. The other Slytherin walked around him, his fingertips pressing lightly over different parts of his scalp. It was weird. Hadrian could feel the slight warmth of Riddle, but there was mostly a coolness to those digits. Was it the effect of the horcrux? In the future, whenever Voldemort had touched him, all he had ever felt was burning pain. Here, it was almost like he was being gentle? Had anyone ever touched him like this before?

“Is there any pain?”

Dark eyebrows flew up. “From my injury? No, I told you.” He pulled away from Riddle’s probing digits.

“That was stupid and reckless of you,” Riddle commented, stepping back. His arms crossed over his chest and he looked down at Hadrian. “I want you to see Professor Slughorn and tell him you are not attending the Ministry Function.”

He snorted. “Yeah, right.”

“It is too dangerous.”

“Well, no one appointed you my mother, Riddle.” Before Riddle could interject, he continued, “You are not the only orphan here. I am stuck forty years in the past, with no friends or family to help me. No family inheritance to pave my way. Just like you, I will attend, make connections and build on them.”

Riddle unfolded his arms, ripping out a piece of parchment from his pocket. “This is why you will not attend,” he hissed.

Hadrian schooled his expression. “You had no business taking that from me.”

“You almost killed yourself over this.” Those cinnamon eyes were dark and alive with fury.

“Well, if I show you everything before the Function, then you won’t have to worry about me, will you? You will have what you want.”

Riddle threw the parchment onto his lap. “Fine, have it your way, *Harry*.”

Hadrian’s stomach flopped at the name but he gathered the note from Grindelwald and shoved it into his hanging cloak. Besides, he was never going to admit to Riddle, but he was hoping that Grindelwald would make an appearance. It meant he could potentially get his hands on the Elder Wand. Learning that stealing the wand could possibly count as ‘winning’ it over, had changed things a little in his mind.

“Well, we should get those memories from that head of yours before you act like a total Gryffindor.” Riddle went over to the cabinet where the pensive was kept. “I do not understand why or how the Sorting Hat put you in Slytherin.”

Hadrian rolled his eyes. “Yeah because talking to snakes and lying about my entire identity is a real Gryffindor trait.” He grinned at the dark look the other boy shot him before he got to his feet and started to look at the shelves.

“What are you looking for?”

“Spells.” Hadrian skimmed the old spines with his finger as he walked past them. “Powerful ones. Might as well make use of this time whilst you are in the pensive.”

There was a slight ‘thunk’ as Riddle placed the bowl down on the table and then the sound of footsteps coming his way. The dark, rich and spicy scent that was unmistakably Riddle followed. Hadrian tried not to inhale it as the Heir of Slytherin came close to him, or look at the other, taller boy. He could still feel the fingers on his scalp.

“This one.” Riddle plucked a slim book from the top shelf of the lower bookcases that Hadrian stood at. “Though, it may be a bit too dark for you.”

Hadrian’s upper lip curled as he snatched the book from Riddle’s hand and stormed back to the table. He sat down and stared at the pensive. With a sigh, he closed his eyes and tried to grasp the next memory that he would place inside the bowl. This one was more vivid than the ones before, and not because it was more recent than his Second and Third Years. He could still remember the smell of the damp grass in the graveyard and feel the piercing, hot pain of the knife slicing into his arm. And Cedric...just laying there…

He pressed his wand to his temple and drew out the shimmering memory - the strand brighter than the ones prior. Dipping it into the pensive, he watched it merge with the liquid before he settled back down into his chair.

“Riddle.”

His words stopped the other boy in his tracks, as Riddle immediately moved over to the bowl.

Hadrian averted his eyes, stomach leaping up to nestle at the base of his throat. “It gets...a bit more serious now.”

There was a tightening around cinnamon eyes before Riddle sunk his head into the pensive.

Hadrian’s mind had been racing, going through the events religiously. He had decided to show Riddle the Third Challenge of the Triwizard Tournament, the graveyard and then the immediate fallout of Moody’s identity. However, it was less of the events that were bothering him, but what Riddle would do with all of that information. Hadrian had studied the book, taking notes on some parchment that was on Riddle’s side of the table. They were pretty dark spells - all in parseltongue - with one that would boil the blood in someone’s veins and another that would release a plume of black smoke that would allow someone to evade detection. The latter reminded him of one of the Weasley Twins’ infamous inventions. Of course, these kind of

spells would have horrified Hermione.

Then, he had slammed the book shut after that thought had crossed his mind. The expectation he should go up against Voldemort - the most powerful Dark Wizard of all time - without any actual training was ridiculous. It made him cringe now to remember Christmas at the Weasley's, where Scrimgeour had called him 'Dumbledore's man' and Harry had confirmed it. The only 'training' Dumbledore had given him were the memories about Horcruxes. No extra lessons on protecting himself or attacking. There were those 'lessons' with Snape that had ended terribly the year before…

Instead, it had been up to him to set up the DA and teach his peers.

All of those thoughts swirled in his mind for the three hours Riddle was submerged, until he rose. Hadrian could not even look at the other boy, just staring at the plain black cover of the spellbook.

The silence went on for a while. Neither boy moved. Neither of them knew how much time passed.

"Can I see your arm?"

Hadrian jolted ever so slightly at the words that broke the silence. He swallowed, unbuttoning his shirt sleeve, knowing what arm the other boy was referring to. Rolling it up, he offered it out between them. His jaw clenched and his eyes flew up when cool fingers gently traced the jagged white line that travelled down his forearm. Hadrian swallowed as his scar flickered to life, warming.

Riddle turned his arm over but then paused. "What is that?"

Emerald eyes flickered up and then down to where the other boy was looking. His hand. ' *I must not tell lies* ' scrawled in his own handwriting, branding his skin. "Nothing." He tried to drag it away, but Riddle grasped his arm, holding him in place.

"A blood quill?"

"It's nothing to do with you."

"Hadrian."

"A Professor did it," he bit out. "A Ministry woman. Stripped out all the practical exercises from Defense, and had us reading books. I challenged her, said it would not prepare us for Voldemort. Detention

was her answer."

"With a blood quill?" Riddle released his arm and stepped back, giving him space. His face was unreadable. "You were older in this memory."

Hadrian felt too vulnerable sitting down in front of him, so he stood up and walked over to the large window that overlooked the main Chamber, keeping half-turned towards the other boy. "It was my Fourth Year, just before I turned fifteen. Nothing happened in my Third Year."

"I did not realise you were this deeply in, Hadrian." Riddle still stood in exactly the same place, like a statue. "You truly are my enemy in the future. Your very blood flows through my future veins...a key to my resurrection...our wands 'brothers'... A war you fight with Dumbledore."

Dumbledore's man . His throat tightened.

"Dumbledore puts a boy, time and time again, in front of a Dark Lord."

Hadrian's eyes rose, burning. "And I win, every time, Riddle."

"But here you are."

Those words stopped his train of thought completely and his mouth opened slightly at the *look* that Riddle gave him. "What?"

Long fingers curled around the top of Hadrian's chair, where his cloak rested. "What do you really want to achieve by doing this, Hadrian? You could have come here, in the past, to position yourself as my enemy...instead you join us in our rituals and have embedded in with my Followers. You could have approached Dumbledore, shown him what I am capable of...what I become. But you did not."

Hadrian tore his eyes away. "I do not know." He stared down at the Chamber, eyes etching each rune to memory that encircled the middle of the open space.

He gasped as a hand took his shoulder, not even hearing Riddle move. "I know why," Riddle whispered in his ear. "You are curious by the darkness that lurks in you. Dumbledore's man is not as Light as is thought."

Hadrian tried to move, twist out of that hand, but it pushed harder. Riddle's weight shifted so that he pinned Hadrian's front against the glass window, the Heir of Slytherin's body pressed against his back.

"No," he breathed, fogging up the glass. His forehead was flush against the cold surface, but his body was warm. Through his mind, flitted the unwanted image of Riddle in the classroom with that Seventh Year Ravenclaw on his knees...a pale hand knitted through dark hair.

"No?" Riddle purred in his ear. "I watched you kill that man Hadrian, the Unspeakable. I felt your magic. You told me that it felt like a whirlpool. You should have felt the magic in the room...sublime. I have never felt anything like it."

Hadrian stiffened and his senses zeroed in on the strong planes of Riddle's body pressed against his.

"Then, during our meeting the other evening...you start thinking about sex with Lord Voldemort." Riddle chuckled at Hadrian's angry retorts. "But then I realise...the dreams...the thoughts. We truly are joined."

The pressure at his back lightened, and Hadrian spun around, only to gasp again as hands grabbed his and pinned them above his head - pinning him against the glass. His eyes were wide as his breath stopped at the *hungry* look that was etched into every inch of the Slytherin's face.

He had expected anger or disappointment from Riddle at the memories...but not this. Whatever 'this' was.

"Let me go." Hadrian struggled against the hands that pinned him down, but Riddle was taller than him and had surprising strength.

The Heir of Slytherin smiled before removing his hands.

Hadrian breathed in relief but then realised that his own hands were not moving from the glass above his head. *Wandless magic*? His emerald eyes flamed. "Riddle," he seethed.

"Now, now, Hadrian...you made a deal with me. I want to explore this magic further...and you swore."

"*This* is not what I meant!"

That infuriating smile grew. “You did not specify any details...and neither did I.” Riddle’s fingers took Hadrian’s chin whilst the other hand drifted up to his scar.

Hadrian released a hiss when a finger pressed gently down on the centre of his forehead, right in the middle of the lightning bolt. Warmth and *need* raced through his body at the touch, as if his magic was trying to explode out of the skin and merge with Riddle. He did not want to open his eyes, scared about what he would see.

“In the future...this causes you immense pain. I could almost *taste* it in your memory...but now.” Riddle’s body moved - flush against his. “What do you *feel* , Hadrian?”

He was silent, eyes squeezed shut as he tried to think about anything other than Riddle.

“A deal is a deal, Hadrian.”

“Not pain,” he ground out.

“No?” Riddle’s voice was honey, dripping into Hadrian’s veins and liquifying them. “You see, the other day when Dumbledore almost stumbled upon us...we diverted his attention. Your magic rose...such a sweet taste on your lips.”

Something soft brushed against his mouth.

“I had to battle you back. Use my magic to quell yours, as not to raise Dumbledore’s suspicion.” Riddle’s voice was a low whisper, a soft breath on the smaller Slytherin’s lips. “Did you know that your scar is the same shape as the wand’s movement for *Avada Kedavra*?”

Emerald eyes opened and he drowned in the brown-red ones that were level with his. The hands at his face had disappeared at some point, but his magic continued to bask in the other boy’s presence. Riddle’s face was so close...his mouth hovering over his.

“I have a suspicion about us,” Riddle breathed. “About you. An impossible one. But from what I see from your memories...you are a man of impossible nature.” He blinked, eyes skimming down Hadrian’s still form as he drew away slightly.

“Let me go, Riddle,” Hadrian uttered, though his voice had lost its power it had at the beginning. Standing here, exposed in front of Riddle made him feel terrified...but mixed in with that was something

else. Something he did not want to dwell on.

“Tom.”

“What?”

“I want you to call me Tom, from now onwards. Promise that, and I will release your hands.”

Hadrian frowned. “Why does it matter?”

“It matters.”

He snorted lightly. “Well, don’t think you can tie me up again and ask me to call you my ‘Lord.”

Those cinnamon eyes gleamed. “Is that an offer, Hadrian?”

“Fuck you, *Tom* .”

Hadrian let out a muffled sound as Riddle’s lips crashed down onto his. He tugged at the invisible restraints, but the other Slytherin’s body moulded to his once again and pinned him to the glass. A tongue darted in as he gave a silent protest, and slid against his. This time, a different sound emerged from his chest as Riddle’s magic rose to greet his. It was dark, enticing as it seemed to coax more whimpers from him.

The kiss deepened as one of Tom’s hands came up and tugged Hadrian’s head back by the hair. The Heir of Slytherin swallowed the delightful noises he elicited from the smaller male before tearing his mouth away.

Hadrian moaned through the onslaught of their battling magic as he felt kisses, hot and hungry against the pale column of his neck. As his senses started to regain, he began to move, trying to move away from the sensations. However, Riddle’s mouth seized his again and his world exploded into pleasure once more.

Hips rolled against his, a hardness pressing against his stomach.

“Riddle,” he gasped, ripping his mouth away.

“Tom.” His mouth descended onto Hadrian’s neck again, nipping and sucking the skin.

Hadrian swore, his head falling back against the glass. “*Tom*,” he

hissed. Their magic danced between them, dark and intoxicating, pulling him further down into the abyss. Before he was utterly submerged, Hadrian tore his neck away. “No. Let me go!”

Tom withdrew from his neck and for the first time since their encounter started, Hadrian drank in the other boy’s appearance. His dark hair was still immaculate, the waves and curl dangling down his forehead. Those eyes were ablaze, and mouth reddened by their kissing. He was not unaffected by this.

“I can’t do this,” Hadrian breathed.

Cinnamon eyes searched his before Riddle whisked away. Hadrian swallowed as his arms fell down, released. They felt light, weightless almost.

“What was that?” he asked, watching the other Slytherin sit down in his usual place at the table. Hadrian shifted, aware of the tightening in his trousers and his cheeks flamed with colour as he quickly made his way over to his chair.

Tom’s eyes flickered to his neck before meeting his. “I was just curious.”

“Curious?” Hadrian sat. “Curious? This is not a game, Riddle.”

The corner of Riddle’s mouth twitched. “Have you forgotten our deal already?”

“What were you so curious over?” he hissed out, ignoring the other boy’s words.

Riddle fiddled with a strange object on the desk that he often used as a paperweight, a metal structure with a crystal inside. “Why did you want to stop?”

“I am the one asking the questions.”

“Humour me.”

Hadrian’s hands curled into fists on the lacquered surface of the large table, glad there was a sizeable distance between them. Why did he ask Riddle to stop? There were a myriad of good reasons. Sitting opposite was the man who would go on to kill his parents, all because of a stupid prophecy. There was nothing to suggest that anything he had showed Riddle, had changed his perspective. And Hadrian did not

want to be used. Everything was a deal or manipulation.

“My emotions are not a game,” he could only utter.

Riddle was quiet for a while. “We should discuss that memory, Hadrian. There is much to go over.” He placed the object down onto the table. “That…thing was what I become.”

Even though it was a statement more than a question, Hadrian decided to respond: “Yes. That is Lord Voldemort as everyone knows. Feared by all, even his Followers.”

“You speak about him, as if he is separate from me.”

Hadrian gave a hollow laugh. “Because he is. Sometimes it is hard to see how you end up that way, and sometimes it is too easy. You saw in the graveyard how your Followers had abandoned you. You rule everyone by fear, not by how you currently rule the Slytherins.”

Tom tilted his head to the side fractionally. “What do you suspect is the root of the change?”

“Your horcruxes, tearing your soul apart may be a starting point,” Hadrian responded sarcastically. “You seem sane now; you have one or two horcruxes. I don’t even know your future ideology, or your current one for that matter. It all gets lost in the ‘let’s just kill everyone who does not perform Dark magic and anyone who is a Muggle sympathiser’.”

This time, the silence was thick and heavy between them. Hadrian’s lips still ached from the kiss, and his gut twisted from the memory of the encounter. It raced through his mind even though he tried to keep his attention on the current strand of conversation. Riddle had evaded giving a reason for doing so. Nevertheless, Hadrian knew that he was not going to get pulled into any games involving his emotions. But the thing that had him more confused was the idea that Riddle had made a deal with him, so that Hadrian could challenge his views and ideology, without a *Crucio* to fire up his nervous system for doing so.

“My ideology…” Tom trailed off before sighing.

“I know you want to become a Defense against the Dark Arts teacher, but it always confused me why.”

There was a strange expression on Riddle’s face. “Why does that confuse you?”

Hadrian shrugged. “It seems so mediocre with your magical ability. You have a group of Followers already who worship the ground you stand on and you want to give that up for teaching?”

Riddle tapped the table with a finger. “You are an orphan too, Hadrian. Sometimes you struggle to leave somewhere you feel…comfortable.”

His stomach flopped at the admission. Was Riddle saying that he viewed Hogwarts as much as a home as he did? Every layer he managed to peel off the Slytherin, he was greeted by surprises. This was not the Tom Riddle he was expecting at all.

“I understand.”

“My ideology is simple. I want to bring back our old wizarding traditions…like the ritual magic you have been involved in. Muggle customs have woven their ways into our society like a plague, and I want to purge it of that. Our fertility rate is dropping. Purebloods interbreed too much, and wizards are having more children with Muggles, exposing more of our world to them. When Muggleborns attend school, or orphans like ourselves left in the Muggle world, we know nothing of the world we are thrust into. I want all magic to be studied.”

Hadrian nodded. “What would you do with the Muggleborns and orphans?”

Riddle shrugged. “Place them with a family? I have not given that much thought.”

“What about Magical Creatures?” At Tom’s raised eyebrow, he continued, “Vampires, Werewolves…they all have a place in society. Outsiders.”

“Who are dangerous.”

“People would say the same to those who practice Dark magic.”

Tom stared at him. “Hadrian, do you not hate your Muggle relatives? I saw what they did to you. To a wizard. I would want that punished…severely.”

“I do hate them,” he admitted, tongue wetting his lower lip. “But I would not want to see them hurt.”

“Why not?”

Hadrian averted his eyes and gave a half-hearted shrug. “I dunno.”

“They abused a *child* .”

His fist curled up into a ball. “I know,” he replied, a hoarse quality to his voice as he remembered the *hunger* and the loneliness. He remembered how invisible he felt. His Year Two teacher had once asked to speak to him after class and asked him how things were at home. He had refused to answer. When the teacher called Petunia in to talk through his lack of friendships and to voice concerns over his homelife, his Aunt had said that he was trouble at home. That he often beat Dudley up in fits of rage and they had strict rules for Harry at home. Then that was it. The teacher drank it up. Harry got a slipper when they were home. He went back to being invisible.

“You think I am worth more than just teaching.”

Hadrian snapped out of his thoughts but did not answer, just worried his lip through his teeth.

“It is a lengthy path…to be Minister.”

“What?” Hadrian’s face morphed into one of horror.

Chapter 25

Chapter Notes

Enjoy the early chapter!

Disclaimer: Some of the wording of the memories come from The Order of the Phoenix and is J.K.Rowling's work, not mine.

“Minister?”

Riddle nodded, gazing over Hadrian’s shoulder. “I am not a patient man, so I may have to navigate my way around through the connections I have already forged.” That finger was back to tapping the table. “But you are correct, perhaps teaching is not making use of my power.”

Mind racing, Hadrian swallowed noisily. Lord Voldemort as Minister for Magic? It would be awful. However, the Slytherin opposite was not Lord Voldemort as the future would not him...not yet anyway. He knew from Dumbledore’s stories that Riddle would go silent after Hogwarts, traveling the world. From there, his sanity would start to unravel.

Emerald eyes blinked but froze when he saw Riddle staring at him thoughtfully. “What?”

The other boy hummed. “We should have lunch with the others, but afterwards, I would like to come back here.” He got to his feet.

Was that the time already? Hadrian sighed and stood up, gathering his cloak up. As he shrugged it on, he struggled to conjure up an appetite with the image of Riddle as Minister. “What do you want to do back here?” His eyes widened when the other boy came around the table, reaching out to straighten his collar. A shudder zipped down his spine at the graze of those cool fingers at his neck. He kept his eyes down, not wanting to look up and initiate anything he did not feel comfortable with.

“I want to try something with our magic. And then we should go onto your next memory, as you have a death wish.” Tom swept out of the library.

Hadrian grumbled under his breath, shoving a hand through his

haphazard hair before joining Riddle back up to the Girl's bathroom. His fingers kept returning to skim over his lips, remembering the pressure and feeling of Riddle's mouth and tongue moving in tandem with his...possessing and hungry. It was nothing like his experience with Cassius. Cassius was like a summer breeze and Tom was a tornado.

"Were you close to that Cedric boy?"

He startled at the question as they reached the Girl's bathroom, closing the entrance behind them. Myrtle was nowhere to be seen, or heard. "No...not really. He was older than me, but we helped each other out during the Tournament."

Riddle nodded. He pushed the door open and held it open for Hadrian to exit the room first. "What was the Tournament like? I thought it was banned since the 1700s."

Hadrian waited for the other boy to fall into step beside him. "It was stupid. A death trap for teenagers. I mean, what kind of society pits teenagers across the world against each other to entertain themselves? Dragons, merpeople...a bloody sphinx."

"Sounds entertaining."

He shot Riddle a look, whose lip twitched at the side with an almost-smile that made Hadrian's stomach flip. "Well, it is not entertaining."

"I am surprised that Dumbledore would allow that to happen."

"Are you?" Hadrian gave a quiet snort. "You saw how he put a three-headed dog in the school to guard the stone. He hired someone linked to Voldemort more than once. My Potions Professor is a Death Eater. Detentions in the Forbidden Forest...I could go on.

"That is true. So, tell me about the dragons."

As they walked through the corridors and down the stairs, Hadrian narrated the story of the first trial. Something inside him loosened retelling the story. Riddle was a good listener, making surprised noises at certain parts of his tale but he remained quiet to allow him to recite the events.

An arm barred across him suddenly, stopping him in his tracks. Hadrian stuttered over his words, but then realised he had been so caught up gesticulating with his narration over his trial with the

dragon, that he had been about to walk off the staircase before it was finished merging.

His cheeks flared with heat. “Thanks.”

Riddle caught his eyes, holding them for a moment as his arm withdrew. “No problem.” They continued their walk, unaware of the Hufflepuff girls that had been travelling on the same stairway as them, who now whispered speculatively behind them as they all made their way to the Great Hall.

“That is an effective use of the summoning spell, especially with a Hungarian Horntail chasing you,” Riddle said as they entered the bustling Hall.

Hadrian’s appetite roared to life at the myriad of smells. He nodded. “A very underrated spell.”

They spotted their usual group of Slytherins. Silas and Antonin were caught up in a fierce debate about the new Cleansweeper broom, whilst the other boys were quietly chatting about one of the new Ministry policies on European travel.

Abraxas’ cool eyes slid up to the both of them as they approached. Hadrian was surprised when Tom told Dorian to move to the other side next to Abraxas, choosing to slide onto the bench next to Hadrian.

Confused as an emotion, did not quite cut it. Hadrian began to serve himself some sandwiches and water, keeping an ear on the conversation around them. Riddle had changed the topic to one of the political situation surrounding the current Minister for Magic, with increasing pressure around Grindelwald. He allowed himself to study the new seating arrangements, and made a note that this was the second time now that Riddle had moved someone out of the way to position Hadrian next to him.

Obviously, the other Slytherin was keeping an eye on him, especially given that Hadrian knew a lot about him. Riddle could not afford that information to get out to anyone else. However, there was another element he could not get away from now. Riddle had kissed him twice now. Once, to cast Dumbledore’s suspicions aside, but the kiss today…

He shifted, quickly picking up the glass of water.

“Everyone is expecting to see Dumbledore step up and get rid of Grindelwald,” Abraxas said.

“What is stopping him?” Cassius replied thoughtfully.

“What do you think, Hadrian?” Tom asked.

Hadrian froze before shooting a dark look at him but Riddle just gave him a mock-inquisitive look in response. He sighed a little. “Well, what do you mean or want when you say Dumbledore has to ‘stop’ him?”

“You think Grindelwald could be contained in a jail?” Abraxas asked, a blonde eyebrow rose before he took a bite of his sandwich.

“I do not think Dumbledore has it in him to kill someone he once called a friend,” he answered carefully. However, it was something he had battled with. Of course, Voldemort was known as more powerful than Grindelwald himself, but Harry Potter had been trained to kill the Darkest Lord of all time. The hypocrisy of Dumbledore was something he tried not to think too long and hard about.

“Interesting,” Abraxas replied. “Did you still want to catch up today with your missed lessons?”

“No,” Riddle answered smoothly before Hadrian could reply. “Hadrian is working on a project with me.”

Hadrian did not miss Abraxas’ eyes slide down to his neck before giving both of them a speculative look. His face drained of colour and it took all of his self-control not to touch where the other boy had been looking. Before he could excuse himself and flee from the hall, a hand slid onto his leg and gave a warning squeeze. There was no way he was making another scene. But now he was paranoid.

“Healer Roberts had been trying to find you yesterday morning and today,” Cassius said from beside Abraxas.

“Oh, okay,” he answered, fiddling with his collar. His attention was suddenly diverted back to the hand on his thigh, which was still sat there. Hadrian tried to shift away, to jolt the hand off, but instead it tightened.

“Yes, you completely disappeared yesterday.”

Hadrian rolled his eyes at Riddle’s accusatory tone. “I went for a walk.

A man is entitled to his privacy."

"Well, you have to give me her name, Hadrian," Elias Nott grinned. "She did a number on you. It looks like you've been attacked by a vampire."

Abraxas groaned and the others shot Elias all looks. Hadrian meanwhile, felt his face drop in mortification before anger surged within him. His magic reacted without another thought. Elias' eyes bulged out, his hands clawing at his neck as he gasped for breath.

"Hadrian," Riddle breathed, leaning down.

Avada Kedavra eyes were ignited with fury as they joined with Tom's. "What?"

"You are drawing attention."

Hadrian's upper lip curled. He withdrew his magic and went back to eating, confident he had made his point. At least the hand had gone from his lap as well. The rest of the meal, he had spent angrily munching on his lunch, until Riddle stood to leave.

As he too stood up, his eyes were caught by a group of Fifth Year Hufflepuff girls who were giggling and looking over at him. Hadrian shook his head before leaving with Riddle. He understood the female attention as Harry Potter - his name was legendary and fame often attracted people. However, here he was a nobody. In fact, he did not even share any classes with the girls or anything. Strange.

He made a point of silence as both of them made the walk back to the Chamber. As Riddle conjured the Chamber to open, Hadrian moved over to a mirror. He gazed in horror at the line of livid red marks in a trail down the left hand side of his neck.

"Riddle!" he hissed, spinning around.

However, Tom was already journeying down into the Chamber. His fists clenched at his sides as he stomped across the bathroom and descended, closing the tap-system behind him. They descended the spiral staircase that Hadrian wished he had known he could have summoned in the future during his Second Year. What did his classmates think about it? They had seen the marks. Of course they would make the connection to Riddle, even if Elias had jumped to a different conclusion. He had been gone all morning with Tom and then he turns up with hickeys all over him.

"*Massster!*"

Hadrian smiled, anger dissipating at the sight of his snake. He picked up his companion when Onyx slithered over, as he reached the bottom. There was a weight to him now as he draped the serpent over his shoulders and strode into the main chamber.

"*What have you been up to*?"

"*Baskssing in the sssun…then roaming with Una.*"

Riddle stood in the middle of the Chamber. "*I hope the both of you are out of sight, especially Una*," Tom said.

"*Yesss*," Onyx replied, with a swish of his tail.

"What are we doing out of the library?" Hadrian asked.

Riddle shrugged off his robes, folding them and then placing them at the feet of Salazar Slytherin. He then withdrew his wand from his pocket. "I want to initiate the *priori incantatem* to study it."

Hadrian grimaced. "Do we have to?"

"You agreed to let me study the magic between us." That wand dangled from those elegant fingers, that gesture identical to Voldemort. "I am curious after those memories of yours, of the graveyard."

He had to make this different. Hadrian nudged Onyx off his shoulders, who slithered down with a disgruntled noise. He too, took off his robes but just placed them outside the runic circle. When he straightened, he drank in Tom's appearance. The other boy had rolled up his sleeves to his elbows and unbuttoned the top buttons of his shirt. It looked casual, and made something hot stir in his stomach.

"This can be used as a ritual circle, or a dueling circle," Riddle explained. "This circle is mainly for blood rituals but these kind of ritual circles also allow for the magic to be contained." He stepped into the circle.

Hadrian scowled, removing his wand from his pocket as he made his way over the etched runes on the polished floor. "Well, after this is done, you are removing what you did to my neck."

Riddle tilted his head slightly to the side. "We will see."

“Riddle,” he warned.

“Tom.” Then, without any warning, he struck.

It was wordless but Hadrian could feel the power tainting the air as it screamed on its way over to him. He threw up a silent ‘expelliarmus’, half-amazed how effective it had been. Wordless magic was more expected in this time than it was in the future, and he had been practising each night and lesson.

He blinked and saw the colours of their spells joining the brother wands. Instead of the bright red like before coming from his, it was a deep green, almost black. Tom’s was still bright green. It must have been a less powerful spell coming from Riddle, as there was not the same force causing them to fly off their feet but there was a tension radiating from his arm and all throughout his body.

Golden thread whisked out of the amalgamation of green magic joining both of the boys - creating a spider web around them, encasing them like prey. The nodule of gold in the middle of the green stayed steadily in the middle as both of them put no will towards moving it. There was a distinct sound of zapping in the air, like an electrical current.

“We will have to test it with the Slytherins,” Tom commented, his voice carrying easily across the distance between them. “To see if we can be attacked during this. My reading around this phenomenon suggests that we cannot.”

“I do not see the relevance of this,” Hadrian grumbled, holding his wand steady. A small part of him wanted to press that bubble forward and take Tom by surprise, but a deal was a deal. If Riddle wanted to study it, then fair enough.

“You do not see the relevance of a shield powerful enough to withstand any curse?” Riddle shook his head a little. “When we fought, our wands battled for domination...but look how it stays silent between us. I must admit, our magic is limited to just the bond of our wands but this could be a strong defense.”

Grudgingly, Hadrian agreed. It had its benefits, but the idea of not being able to use any other magic was a massive downside. “Just because we cannot use magic, does not mean that we could not use other magical items.”

Cinnamon eyes latched onto his, a slow smile spreading across his

mouth. “Interesting idea, Hadrian.” His gaze then slid to Onyx who was just watching what the wizards were up to.

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Senses buzzing, Hadrian could not keep still. For hours they had studied the *priori incantatem*. Onyx had not been able to get in, however, they had managed to drop the spell between them. The last time they did it, it had been a battle of wills to dominate, but the will to end it mutually had released them both.

Riddle had then made them conjure it again, this time with Onyx inside. Sadly, the spell had ejected the snake from the spider web of gold. The snake had spat at them both furiously before slithering away where he ‘would not be experimented on’. It was then that Riddle had one last experiment. If their magic was put against each other and created *priori incantatem* , then what would it do if the brother wands joined forces?

There was now a massive hole in the Chamber wall, right next to Slytherin’s statue. A simple *reducto* had blasted through meters of rock. By themselves, they had managed a mere crack in the mirror-like walls.

Tom had been beside himself with glee - the happiest Hadrian had ever seen him. Hadrian was now watching him as he inspected the massive hole. His hand clenched and unclenched by his side, as his magic fluttered within him. There was no magic exhaustion. In fact, he had never felt more invigorated after using magic. It reminded him of how he had felt after killing Croaker. As that thought flitted through his mind, Hadrian’s stomach flopped.

“Help me repair it,” Riddle said, as he made his way back to Hadrian, who was standing just outside of the ritual circle.

Both of them raised their wands, and after a quick glance at each other, they wordlessly cast ‘*reparo*’. Bits of the stone rose from their haphazard resting points and they watched as the wall knitted itself back together again.

Riddle released a hum, tucking his wand back into his pocket. He turned to face Hadrian, and before the other boy could do or say

anything, a cool hand pressed to his neck. Magic tingled between them. Those cinnamon eyes searched his for a moment, and then he withdrew - walking away to the tunnel leading back up to the library.

Hadrian gave a disgruntled noise before following him, although nerves bubbled inside of him. He made his way up the staircase to enter the warm room. Riddle had lit the fire in the massive hearth near the window that looked over the Chamber. He was standing over it, looking into the burning embers.

“This won’t work in a pensive,” Hadrian said, walking over to the fire to seek its warmth after the coolness of the ritual area.

“No?”

He grimaced. “My Fifth year at Hogwarts was...disjointed. There is not just one event.”

Tom was silent for a long moment. “The only other way would be to use Legilimency.”

“I am not putting myself through pain, and allowing you inside if you will just rip your way through.” Hadrian clasped his hands together in front of him. It was hard to remember the pain he had felt whenever Voldemort entered his mind; too much time was passing by without living in the dark shadow of the Dark Lord. However, he remembered how his nerves had tingled for days after and how his scar had throbbed.

“Hadrian, your mind is too precious for me to destroy. I would see it a privilege that you would let me in.”

There was a softness to Tom’s voice that he had never heard before. Hadrian bit his bottom lip. He knew his Occlumency shields were strong enough to throw him out if he was in any trouble. Nodding, he turned slightly to the other boy. “Can we do it by the fire?”

“Of course.” Riddle eyed the rug before lowering himself to sit on it cross-legged.

Hadrian sat down opposite, his mind racing with all of the things he wanted to avoid Tom seeing. Typical. He closed his eyes and took in a deep, measured breath. The fingers of warmth from the hearth grazed against his cheek. It helped him deepen his meditation, despite the presence of his peer. Then, he began his search.

After a while, he opened his eyes, seeing Tom giving him an unreadable look. “All right,” he said, voice a little hoarse after his inward adventure.

“Just bring each memory to the surface.”

“I know.” He then felt a probing sensation in the front of his mind and then the library and fire melted away. His scar tingled with warmth.

The playground…confrontation with ‘Big D’…then everything disappeared - stars, moon and streetlamps - before an icy chill struck the air. Dudley panicking before striking at Harry…falling to the ground and then the towering figure gliding towards him. He knew its dark cloak and its death-like grip. Then his wand in his hand. ‘Expecto Patronum’ stumbling from his lips in order to save Dudley and himself. An enormous silver stag erupting out…chasing away the dementors…coming across Mrs Figg. The Dursleys huddled around Dudley who was a gibbering mess. Vomit. Then blame - from the Dursleys and then the owl. The letter from the Ministry for Underage Magic…to destroy his wand…a hearing. Then another owl from Arthur Weasley. Dumbledore was trying to sort it. Thoughts of running. Another letter…Ministry…not destroying his wand but the hearing would take place. A howler for Petunia after informing them about Voldemort’s return…then his room, with only his thoughts and worries for company.

Hadrian surfaced, his heart thundering as he was still caught up in the memories of hopelessness and frustration.

“Your relatives are simply revolting,” Tom said, his upper lip curling.

He half-shrugged. “They were up against something they did not understand. Their son was possibly brain dead. Well, more brain dead than usual.”

“They did not even try to understand, not even after you told them a dark wizard was after you.”

Hadrian raised an eyebrow. “You expect anything else?” He shifted on the rug, feeling the stone underneath. “Anyway, this is just the backdrop for the rest of the year.”

“Wait.” Tom tilted his head. “Your patronus has changed.”

His mind flitted back to the silver dragon that had soared out of his wand in his duel with Lestrange. “Yes…I heard it could. I don’t really know why. The stag linked me to my dad. Anyway…”

As they both settled again, Hadrian allowed Tom to enter his mind...a cool but not demanding presence as he pushed the memories to the surface.

The group of adult wizards turning up at Privet Drive...a broomstick ride full with moonlight and bright red sparks. Grimmauld Place. The Order of the Phoenix - the name scrawled on a piece of parchment. Going inside the new door, it was dark...Mrs Weasley welcoming him. Where was this? A new door. Hermione throwing herself on him in a hug, her bushy hair tickling his nose and smelling of mint. Ron, awkwardly standing there. Both of them apologising for not contacting him...not allowed. A strained silence. Wanting to be alone. Screaming at the both of them. He had been alone...stuck at the Dursleys. Bitter words tumbling out. Then Sirius. Sirius explaining...giving him support...also irritated at Dumbledore keeping Harry away. Family. His godfather...someone to give him a home. A brief flash of the trial...of Dumbledore barely looking at him and sweeping out at the end without another word.

Hadrian dragged a breath through to his lungs as he emerged from the flashes of memories. He looked away from Riddle before he could catch the look in the other boy's eyes. His heart pinched. Just seeing Sirius' face was difficult. Sometimes, his godfather's face was so vivid in memories that he could outline every wrinkle around the man's eyes.

"I can see why, from that, you have issues with consulting with Dumbledore."

Hadrian traced the patterns of the rug with his finger. "Dumbledore is human. Everyone treats him like a godly figure, especially as he dealt with Grindelwald, but he is human. He has his faults. Sometimes he is wrong."

"That was the Black house."

Hadrian nodded. "Yes."

"I have been there. Orion Black is in Third Year, but his father Arcturus Black I met at the Malfoy Estate. He invited a lot of us to meet his son. The Black that you know - Sirius - does not hold the same affinity for dark magic."

He looked up at that. "Sirius was a good man." Before Tom could comment on his words, he said, "I need to continue. This is tiring."

Questioning the pink monstrosity that was Umbridge in her classroom.

Then, detention…the blood quill etching the words: 'I must not tell lies' on his hand. The words gleamed with blood that dripped down onto the parchment. Umbridge's delight at the pain. His confusion as he stumbled back to the Common Room when he avoided his friends and tried to hide away… His growing frustration with the new 'rules' and Dumbledore's lack of intervention. The Room of Requirement offering them a place to train. To fight. Training them all…teaching them defensive spells…patronuses…

"Can I see it again?"

Hadrian held out his hand and his breath caught at the soft touch of fingers tracing the scarring on his hand. What he wanted was to enter Tom's mind and see what he was thinking and feeling - if anything. Why did the boy want to see it? Was it some sick fascination like the one he held with the scar on his forehead? The scar that grew very warm each time Riddle entered his mind.

When the hand withdrew, he went back into his head and once more, allowing him in.

He was dreaming. His body was gliding across stone, a serpentine swish as he travelled to his prey…a man ahead. Not part of the plan. The man awakened and he sunk his fangs into the man's doughy flesh. Blood burst into his mouth. Bone splintered. The prey slumped…silent. Harry waking from his dream, panic as he panted that Ron's dad was in trouble. McGonagall questioning him. Dumbledore seeking information to see if his vision was true…and yes, a body. Arthur Weasley badly injured. Guilt invading his thoughts and feelings. He had been the snake. Moody linking Harry seeing through the eyes of Voldemort's snake - Nagini. The feeling of dirtiness at the idea of Voldemort using Harry, of their connection. A weapon, something he did not have last time…that was Harry? Possessing him. Then, forward…into the lessons with Snape. Occlumency. Later, after Christmas…a dream. He was Voldemort. His fingers long and pale fingers as they touched the chair in front of him. Rockwood. Bode. Malfoy. Avery to be called. Turning to the mirror…a white skill and crimson eyes…

Hadrian stumbled out of his memories as a sharp pain sliced into his thoughts.

Riddle was gripping his hand. When had he taken in? Those cinnamon eyes were hard and questioning as the pain from his head bled away. "You can see through his eyes…his snake as well?"

He nodded, unable to say anything. That *look* Riddle was giving him robbed him of all speech. It was angry, confused…horrified. Hadrian

could only watch as Tom got to his feet and strode over to the window overlooking the Chamber. From his position in front of the fire, he could only see his back and a fraction of his cheek.

His mind raced. Was there something Hadrian had missed? Or was he embarrassed that Hadrian held power in the future to enter his mind. He rubbed his scar which was still tingling from Tom's access to *his* mind.

"Has Dumbedore ever given you a reason for the connection you have with Voldemort?"

Hadrian jumped a little as the question suddenly cut through the silence. "What? No. I only know that my scar is somehow connected."

The laughter that poured from Tom's mouth was empty and hollow. He turned to Hadrian, and his wand was dangling from his fingers. But it was the strange, crooked smile on his mouth that robbed Hadrian of his breath.

Chapter 26

Chapter Notes

> Enjoy this one! Your comments are amazing, so I really hope you all like this new installment.
>
> Let me know what you think!
>
> Disclaimer: This chapter outlines the direct wording of the prophecy. This is J.K.Rowling's, not my own.

“What are you doing?” Hadrian withdrew his wand, eyeing the other boy nervously. He could see too much of Voldemort in the strange expression on his face.

“I want to perform a spell on you.”

His eyebrows flew up, and Hadrian released a small, awkward laugh. “What?” His hand gripped the handle of his wand.

“I need to do this.”

“Well, what is the spell?”

Riddle’s gaze hardened. “I cannot tell you.”

“No.”

“I do not want to force you.”

“I have just allowed you into my mind. What did you see that made you act like this?” Hadrian replied, a sharp edge to his voice now. At Riddle’s silence, he made a sound of frustration. “I don’t understand you sometimes. You have clearly seen something to spook you and you just come out and want to cast a spell on me, one you won’t even say what it is. You know what, Riddle? I am done.”

White-hot anger spread like fiendfyre through his veins as he spun around and stomped out of the library. *Stupid, stupid* , he thought. It was stupid of him to do this, to think he was making any difference. ‘ *I do not want to force you* ’. Those words echoed in his mind, in time with each of his strides away from Riddle.

Cool fingers suddenly slid around his wrist, stopping Hadrian in his

mission to grab his robes and go. His scar bled warmth, calming the thundering of his heart.

“Hadrian - Harry. I apologise.”

His world stopped. Emerald eyes were wide as he turned to the other Slytherin. Tom’s face was close, his features softened and his gaze heavy with worry and regret. “You called me ‘Harry’.”

Riddle searched his eyes. “What would you prefer?”

Hadrian shrugged. “I don’t mind. I think I am more comfortable now, with Hadrian.” He stiffened as Tom’s other hand cupped his jaw. His stomach turned to hot liquid as he stared up at the handsome planes of the other boy’s face.

“Will you forgive me? I got caught up in everything...seeing all of that.” His thumb brushed over Hadrian’s cheek, eyes darkening when the movement elicited a shudder from the smaller male.

“An apology, from Tom Riddle? Am I dreaming?”

Riddle’s mouth quirked in the shadow of a smile. “You are the only one who would receive such an honour.”

All of Hadrian’s anger dripped away and he found himself leaning into the softness of that cool palm. His scar was still warm, throbbing with the beating of his heart. “I forgive you.”

Tom then drew away. “Can you show me the rest? I want to see; if you will let me.”

Hadrian ran a hand through his hair, hesitantly looking up at where he knew the library was. If he left the memories where they were, Riddle would be hanging on the knowledge that he could possess Hadrian in the future. He wanted the Slytherin to understand what happened to Hadrian because of it all. His thoughts skidded to a halt. When had his thoughts gone from deterring Riddle, to Riddle ‘understanding’ him?

What was this? The touches...the kissing...the apology…

“Hadrian?”

“Yes.” He blinked back to reality. Did he *fancy* Tom Riddle? The man who would become his parents’ killer. But not yet. The young man in

front of him was not yet the monster that massacred his way through the wizarding population. He was a killer, yes. But so was Hadrian, now. His stomach tightened at the revelation.

"Shall we?" Tom gestured with his hand.

This time, it was Hadrian who led the way back up to the library and sat in front of the fire first. He swallowed loudly as Riddle sat opposite him, those eyes drinking him in...devouring him. "All right...I am ready."

The Department of Mysteries... a high, cold voice...Sirius...Crucio...Harry coming too and demanding Professor McGonagall...Sirius has been taken by Voldemort. Thestrals...flying to save Sirius...it was cold, dark...and he was worried that he would be too late. Going into the Ministry...rows upon rows of shelves...orbs...Ron stopping him. One orb had his name.

S.P.T to A.P.W.B.D

Dark Lord

And (?) Harry Potter

He took the ball...and then the voice of Lucius Malfoy breaking the silence. Him demanding where Sirius was...and Bellatrix Lestrange mocking him...a prophecy. His power move against Bellatrix...threatening her with smashing it...her boss not being happy...Malfoy jeering that Dumbledore had never told him about a prophecy connecting him with the Dark Lord...then confirmation that Sirius was not a victim of the Dark Lord. It had been a placed vision into Harry's head. Then carnage. Yelled 'Reductos' from behind...shelves falling...orbs smashing...fighting...hiding...fighting...then trapped with ten Death Eaters. Help. Sirius, Lupin, Moody, Tonks and Kingsley...then helping Neville...the prophecy slips...falls and everything is too loud to hear. Dumbledore arriving and the Death Eaters scrambling away… Not Bellatrix...she continued with Sirius. A spell striking him in the chest...and then falling...falling into the veil...His cries. Then anger. White-hot. Lightning through his limbs...pulling away from Lupin to chase after Bellatrix...who gloated. Him yelling 'Crucio' but nothing. 'You need to mean them, Potter.' The Voldemort. A statue protecting him from the 'Avada Kedavra'. Then Dumbledore again. The fight...such power. Then nothing but his scar splitting open...bound and his mouth moving as if he were a mere puppet. Harry longed for death...for the pain to end...and then nothing. Voldemort disappearing. Back at Hogwarts...his fury with Dumbledore...the loss of Sirius… The truth from the Headmaster...the scar as their connection...to read Voldemort's emotions...awareness of his

presence. Apologies...Dumbledore aware that Voldemort could take control of Harry's mind...and the 'shadow' of Voldemort behind Harry's eyes. Protection from Voldemort from his mother's sacrifice...her protection. Then the prophecy…

*

'The one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord approaches…

Born to those who have thrice defied him, born as the seventh month dies…

And the Dark Lord will mark him as his equal, but he will have power the Dark Lord knows not…

And either must die at the hand of the other for neither can live while the other survives…

*

Dumbledore confirming that one of them will have to kill the other for this to all end...the man's tears as he wept for Harry's bleak future …

Hot, wet tears ran down his cheeks. Hadrian used the sleeve of his shirt to wipe them away, turning his face from the other boy. There was a deep, cavernous hole inside him that the memory of Sirius belonged to. It was like a whirlpool; once he got too close, it sucked him into its misery and self-loathing.

"A self-fulfilling prophecy," Riddle uttered. "I mark you as an equal...because of the prophecy." There was a shuffle before a hand turned Harry's face towards him. "And this…" His finger traced the lightning bolt scar, where a slight sigh fell from the raven-haired boy's mouth. "This connects you to him...to me."

"To him. Not you...you don't cause me pain. I cannot see through your eyes," Hadrian replied, trying to focus with that finger causing heat to travel down his body.

"That dream we had, of your childhood, we shared that. Your scar is connected to *me* . I can feel it; I can feel you whenever you are near," Riddle murmured. "What does it feel like? It does not cause you pain."

Hadrian's cheeks flared. "Not pain."

"Then what?" When Hadrian did not answer, Riddle pressed his finger harder on the scar as he traced it again. His lips curled up as a choked moan slid from the smaller male's lips. "Pleasure?" Not waiting for a reply, he leaned into his ear. "What an interesting reaction."

"Tom," Hadrian breathed.

"Did Dumbledore ever tell you more about the scar?"

He blinked, watching as Tom withdrew. Fighting away embarrassment, he licked his bottom lip before searching his jumbled thoughts. "No, nothing. But we spoke about the prophecy just before I left. Dumbledore was insistent that my power over you was love." His eyes slid away to the fire. "He said that I had never been seduced by the Dark Arts and that my ability to love protected me from it. I was pure of heart...my soul was untarnished and whole. But...it isn't anymore is it?" He fiddled with a loose bit of thread on the rug the both of them were sat on. "My soul is ripped. It is ripped and tarnished because I killed Croaker. Does that mean my ability to love is gone?" Hadrian finally turned his haunted eyes to Riddle.

Tom was frowning, deep in thought. His mouth twisted and then he replied, "I don't know, Hadrian. I don't think so. Dabbling in the Dark Arts does not strip away your capacity to love. Of course, you have killed a man and that does damage the soul, but look at how much you have loved your friends and family. Has that disappeared?"

Hadrian shook his head. The fire cracked beside them, and Hadrian allowed the heat to sink into his bones to warm him. "There is nothing more to show you. Dumbledore wanted to take me to destroy another horcrux he had found, but I had an incident with a Slytherin...Abraxas' grandson. We are - were - enemies. I used a spell I did not understand on him...slicing him open." He took in a trembling breath. "I fled when someone came to help, but it was from a potions book I had found with writing inside. I wanted to hide it away, so it would not be found. So, I went to the Room of Requirement and asked for somewhere to hide and when I entered...I was here."

"Can you show me where it is?"

"The Room of Requirement? Yes...but not today. I am tired now."

Tom stared at him. "One more thing, Hadrian." When he was sure he had the other boy's attention, he asked, "Where were you yesterday

morning?"

Hadrian froze. "I was just walking around and I went to Hogsmeade. I just needed some space."

Riddle hummed. "This brings an end to our first deal, but I would still like to explore our magic further." He gently squeezed Hadrian's knee before patting it. "Go and rest. I am going to stay down here for a while, to digest what I have seen."

They both stood, and as Hadrian dusted off his trousers, he watched the other Slytherin retreat back to the table where the pensive lay - now obsolete. Had he done the right thing? Riddle knew everything knew. If anything, he knew *too* much. "Tom?" He watched as the pale face turned to him, the candlelight throwing shadows under his eyes and into the slight hollows of his cheeks. "Please don't create anymore horcruxes. There are other ways to hide from Death."

Hadrian then left, wrapped up in his thoughts and wanting to be by himself for a while. He was not aware of the hungry eyes that followed his movements across the Chamber, from the window that overlooked it. Nor was he aware of the plans already formulating in the young Riddle's mind.

***

The undulating, green hill backdrop appeared real, so real that the front row of students could pick out each, individual blade of grass. With each breath of the false wind, the blades shuddered and moved. It was obvious that Dumbledore's impressive magic had been used for the set design, even if Dippet had repeated that fact numerous times throughout the introduction to the play.

In the middle of the top of the hill that the play was centred around, was a wide, stone fountain. It was big enough for multiple people to bathe in; its bowl rounded at the sides almost like a bath. There were runes etched into the brim and base but from where the Slytherins were sitting - at the back - they were difficult to make out.

Hadrian was disinterested anyway. They were missing lessons for a pointless play, a pet project of Professor Beery. He felt he was sliding away in his studies, especially because he missed lessons last week.

So, he was more focused on his book that he had smuggled into the play, hiding it in the folds of his cloak that he had gathered in his lap. It was the missing Arithmancy work from Thursday's lesson. Strangely, he was enjoying it, but Abraxas had a way of wording it all so it made it easier to understand. It had given him a solid basis for the more advanced theory.

Emerald eyes slid over to Riddle, who was sitting beside him. The boy looked bored and tired. Tom had skipped dinner yesterday, and had only just made it to the common room for curfew where he had gone straight to bed. There were smudges of darkness that underlined his eyes.

Cassius had attempted to sit on his other side, but had been navigated away by Abraxas, who had taken the place instead. Hadrian was very suspicious of Tom's involvement in this. Was it a hierarchical move? Or a possessive one? Hadrian had the knowledge of who Tom was, and just what he was capable of. Would Tom really want him getting close to one of his followers, and possibly telling someone else? However, he found himself missing Cassius less and less the more time he had spent with Riddle. Just sitting here, next to him, his skin buzzed with feeling. He was aware of Tom's presence like never before.

Small bubbles of laughter rose from the crowd as three witches appeared on scene: Asha with her malady no one could cure; Altheda who had been wronged, by being robbed by a man; and Amata who had been deserted by the one she loved. The students loved seeing their peers dressed up as these fictional characters.

There was a small group of Hufflepuff girls who kept looking over to Hadrian and Riddle, giggling amongst themselves. Hadrian frowned at them, realising there were the same group from yesterday. But his frown did not seem to deter them.

Hadrian sighed, looking back down to his book. However, he sniffed at the smell of something smoky as it drifted over. His head rose once more and he spotted some smoke rising underneath part of the enchanted stage, to the right of the actors. Was it part of the set? Smoke?

Suddenly, a large, white 'worm' crashed through the staging, shattering it. Hadrian knew something was definitely wrong at that point - given the worm was the finale. He closed his book with a smack as the worm started to convulse.

“Trevor!” the student playing Asha screamed, backing away from the grotesque beast.

“You disgusting *whore*,” screamed the student playing Amata. She grabbed ‘Asha’s’ hair and *pulled*. The wig ripped off her head, falling to the floor. “He is *my* boyfriend!”

The audience watched on with a mix of horror and laughter.

As ‘Amata’ and ‘Asha’ whipped out their wands, the worm exploded. Red sparks flew everywhere, catching the stage and the enchantments fell. The wooden parts the charms had been attached to, caught fire quickly.

Professor Beery flounced out from behind the stage, his eyes wide open as he screamed for help. However, he quickly threw himself to the floor when a spell from ‘Amata’ shot in his direction, as he stood in the middle of the duelling witches.

Just then, an explosion rocked the seating and the floor. A fireball engulfed part of the stage that had been smoking. The thick, grey smoke flooded the Hall instantly.

There was screaming everywhere and it was *hot* . Hadrian stood up, discarding his book and the cloak. He barely saw Abraxas escaping, but he could make out Tom’s form, rising also to stand.

Without thinking, Hadrian seized Tom’s hand. His magic twitched to life at the physical contact. “Tom...please, we need to do something.” He erupted into coughing as the smoke filled his lungs.

His hand tugged. “We need to get out of here,” Riddle hissed.

“No.” Hadrian planted his feet into the ground. He coughed again. “Let us try our magic.”

There was a heartbeat of silence until his hand was squeezed. “*Aguamenti*.”

He nodded, although he knew Tom could not see through the smoke. It was when he felt Tom’s magic rise up, that he allowed his too, as well. “*Aguamenti*,” both of them cast in unison.

Their magic erupted out of their brother wands. A tsunami of water appeared in front of them, crashing down into the chairs and staging in front of them. The boys stood there as the fires were immediately

extinguished. Dippet and Dumbledore stepped in, waving their wands and dissipating the smoke from the air.

“That was…” Hadrian trailed off. He glanced up at Tom, and saw how their magic still danced between them, almost visible with how strong it was. Those brown eyes tinged with just a hint of red gazed back at him.

“Boys.” Dumbledore was the first one over. His mouth was set in a firm line, and when those usually-twinkly blue eyes dropped to their joined hands, the line seemed to swallow his lips. His robes were soaking wet but he took out his wand and dried himself off.

“Professor Dumbledore?” Tom replied, his tone neutral and polite.

“I think it is best we take this to my office,” Headmaster Dippet said, his smile strained as he made eye contact with Hadrian. He then turned, “Beery, get this mess tidied up and wait outside my office.” His voice changed and thundered across the Hall. Water dripped from his bushy beard and eyebrows.

Professor Beery - drenched - lifted himself up off the floor, face devoid of colour.

Hadrian slid his hand out of Riddle’s reluctantly, and pulled his magic back. He rolled his shoulders. It was getting more difficult to take it away, almost as if it wanted to be constantly joined with Tom’s.

“Why are we going to your office?” Hadrian asked. “We just helped get rid of the fire.” It was no wonder why there were no more school plays in the future…

Dippet gave him a stern look before whisking away. “Office. Now.” Dumbledore also exited.

Hadrian sighed. There were students emerging from all areas of the Great Hall, watching the Head and Deputy with the two Slytherin boys.

Tom brushed his arm, giving him his robes and book. “Let me steer the conversation,” he murmured. He nudged Hadrian forward.

“Can you hold this?” Riddle took the offered book from him as they both walked out of the Hall, so Hadrian could shrug on his robes. When he took the book back, he offered the taller boy a smile of ‘thanks’.

“That was an impressive use of magic,” Riddle said. “It certainly opens up possibilities.”

Hadrian nodded as they made their way to the staircases. “I just don’t understand why we are being hauled into Dippet’s office about it.”

“It is something they do not quite understand. People are always afraid of that.” Riddle turned to him and cast a cleaning charm on the both of them. He then leaned forward and pushed some of the haphazard hair away from his forehead.

His breath caught at the gesture and Hadrian turned away. He wanted his face away from Tom, aware that inside he was scared and he did not want the other boy picking it up. A megalomaniac Riddle he could possibly deal with, but this was different. Tom was being *nice . Too* nice. The touches...the words...everything. And Hadrian could not deal with it. He knew Voldemort, but Riddle was another kettle of fish. He had no idea how emotionally available Tom Riddle was. Even so, Hadrian was not here in the past to get hurt. He recalled the Potions class where they had studied and brewed Amortentia, where he had questioned if a baby born from a love potion could love.

“Hadrian, does Dippet know?”

He gave a nod, still not looking at him. “He does, but he can only speak to me about it all. He is under an Unbreakable Vow.”

Riddle made a thoughtful sound.

They made their way in silence to the Headmaster’s Office. Dippet was sat waiting at his desk, whilst Dumbledore stood to the side, exactly where Fawkes would sit in the future.

As they took their seats opposite, Hadrian brought up his Occlumency shields up. With Dumbledore in the room, it was a must.

“So, boys, explain to me what happened.”

“Well, Sir,” Tom began, “it was a natural reaction. We wanted to help, and cast at the same time.”

Professor Dumbledore looked over his half-moon spectacles. “That was no ordinary casting at the same time.”

“I do not know what happened, Professor,” Tom answered, his voice dripping with politeness.

“Mr Peverell, what is your explanation?”

He avoided eye contact with Dumbledore, just looking at the space above his head. “Exactly what Tom says, Sir.”

“The both of you have been...absent from your House recently. Not studying with your peers,” Dumbledore continued.

“That is my fault,” Tom replied. “Hadrian and I have been spending a lot of time together by ourselves. We have found ourselves enjoying each other's company...and well, we wanted to keep our relationship to ourselves for a while.”

Hadrian struggled to keep his expression flat and emotionless. *Relationship*? What was Riddle doing? But when his eyes darted over, Tom looked calm and collected.

“Relationship?” Dippet asked. His eyes narrowed onto Hadrian.

“Yes, relationship, Sir. We are both aware that relationships between men are still not as accepted as heterosexual relationships, and we want to enjoy the time together without fear of judgement.”

The Headmaster’s attention returned to Riddle. “Mr Riddle, we are a very accepting school and you both do not have to fear judgment. I suppose these fears may come from the influence of your Muggle upbringing, but the wizarding world is accepting of such relationships. Professor Dumbledore is testament to that.” Dippet gestured to his Deputy, who appeared to stiffen minutely.

Hadrian was rooted to his chair, his cheeks burning at the conversation around him. He wanted to grab Riddle and demand exactly what was going on. The only thing he could think about was that he was weaving the narrative into what Dumbledore had seen the other evening, where Tom had kissed him to avoid suspicion about the Chamber of Secrets location. However, what stirred his interest was the comment about Dumbledore. That, linked to what he knew about Grindelwald, made things a bit more interesting.

“Thank you, Sir,” Riddle answered.

“Does that please you, Albus?” Dippet asked. “Both of these boys have kept their outstanding grades, despite missing time with their peers and the library.” Without waiting for a response, the Headmaster continued, “I am sure this was a freak accident with your magic, but I must say to both of you, that if you find this recurs, I would like you

to come to me." That was aimed at Hadrian with a look. "Now, Mr Riddle, please return to your common room until the mess is sorted. We need a word with Hadrian."

Tom was still for a moment, before he stood up. His hand landed on Hadrian's shoulder and gave a gentle squeeze. As the Slytherin left, Hadrian was left wondering about the touch. Was it a warning or reassurance?

"There is a further matter we need to discuss, Hadrian," Dippet said.

"Yes, Sir."

"How are you feeling after your recent head trauma?"

"Fine."

"Healer Roberts was trying to find you on Saturday. He was so concerned when he could not find you, that he asked to see me. You were not in the castle, or on the grounds."

Hadrian just stared at the Headmaster.

Dippet's eyebrows rose. "Care to explain where you were?"

His jaw clenched at the tone of the older man's voice. "Hogsmeade, Sir."

A piece of parchment appeared in front of Dumbledore. "Your name was not on the list that is required for students to sign. Your Head of House assures me that he went through protocol with you."

"My apologies."

Blue eyes fixed on him. "You did not use the main entrance to Hogsmeade."

"I will in the future," he replied tightly.

"These rules are in place for your safety, as a student," Dippet explained.

"I apologise."

"As this is a breaking of the school rules, we have taken away the rights for you to visit anywhere outside Hogwarts for a month. We do have to set a standard for all of our students," the Headmaster said.

Hadrian's mouth fell open. "What? Does this include the Ministry Function?"

"Yes. We will inform Professor Slughorn."

"No, I have to go to this," Hadrian exploded out. "Please, Headmaster, this is a real opportunity for me to have a future. I don't have the luxury of an inheritance or family to fall back on."

"Armando, if I may?" Dumbledore interjected. At the Headmaster's nod, he said to Hadrian, "I would be willing to accept Mr Peverell serving his punishment through detention with myself every evening for two weeks, to make up his time."

Shit. Hadrian's eyes flitted between both of the men. Time with Dumbledore instead.

"I would be willing to accept that," Dippet answered.

Hadrian shook his head. "This is ridiculous. Tom and I saved the Hall, and this is the thanks?" *Really shouldn't have bothered*, were the words he wanted to end with. He clenched his teeth. "Fine, whatever. As long as I can go to the Ministry."

Ten minutes later, Hadrian was stomping his way down to the common room. He wore his anger like a shroud, cursing Dumbledore with every word in his mental vocabulary and then repeated them in Parseltongue.

In the common room, everyone was sitting down chatting about the events. When Hadrian entered, it went silent for a moment but he ignored them. He strode over to his usual group and plonked himself down on the comfy wing-backed chair next to Tom's.

Tom looked fucking majestic next to him, lazily sat there with his leg crossed over his other in a mascline sprawl. However, that only stirred more anger inside of him.

"*What did they say to put you in such a bad mood?*"

Hadrian felt his upper lip curl. "*A punishment for leaving the castle Saturday, without signing out. They wanted to keep me at Hogwarts for a month...no Ministry Function.*"

"*That could be a good thing, given Grindelwald's warning*," Tom drawled.

The Slytherin's watched the interaction, their conversations half-forgotten. Elias rubbed his neck absently, eyeing Hadrian.

"*Well, Dumbledore made a deal with me. Detention with him for two weeks*." Hadrian glared at him. "*And what was that about a relationship?*"

Tom's face remained mostly passive, but his upper lip curved slightly. "*Just playing our part, darling*."

"*You are a monster.*" Hadrian's stomach tumbled at the mock endearment.

"*Be careful with Dumbledore.*"

He snorted. "*I know him better than you.*"

"*But that does mean you could underestimate him. He will not like how much time you spend with me, given his suspicions already about my behaviour*."

He did not answer this time, just glowering. Tom, however, slid back into the conversations between the Slytherins and left Hadrian to his thoughts.

Chapter 27

Chapter Notes

Thank you all for the reviews for the last chapter! I am glad you all like the sweet Hufflepuff girls; they have a KEY role next chapter in dedication to all of you and your kind words for this story.

I hope you enjoy this latest installment and what it means going forward. There is serious angst going on from this chapter forth... LOTS of Dumbledore.

A lot of you are asking about Cassius, and as you can see, Tom is keeping him FAR away from Hadrian. Sweet jealousy!

It was a beautiful manor house, set upon sprawling land. The stonework had ivy tumbling upon it, creeping onto the window frames and silhouetting the large entrance doors. Golden lights glowed from inside, only broken by the criss-cross of metal diamonds patterned onto the windows. The hill on which the house was perched on, overlooked the small town below. Beyond that was a small forest. The sun was sinking into the horizon, and darkness taking hold of the quintessential scene.

Hadrian drank in the beauty of the land, until the moon disappeared behind a muddle of clouds and hid most of the view away. He turned back to the manor house. The large, wooden door was ajar. Making his decision, he decided to go in, to see where he was and who lived there.

The hall in which he emerged was light, lit up by a large chandelier hanging from the ceiling and a series of lamps in various nooks and crannies. There were no sounds of footsteps or life, so Hadrian ventured further in. A sprawling staircase dominated the entrance hall of the house, each step carved out of solid, dark wood. It was like a snapshot of life from the history books in Primary school when they had learnt about Morrison shelters and constructed their own with the school tables. Why did he still remember that? It was obviously during the time of the war. His current time.

A scream rose exploded into the silence of the room, invading before quickly withdrawing and leaving Hadrian in the now eerie quiet of the hall.

Hadrian frowned, trying to pin-point where the scream had come from.

Then there was a series of thuds. He turned down to the corridor to the left, where the corridor was slightly darker, a few dim lights hanging from the ornate ceiling.

Up ahead, there was a set of open doors clearly leading the way into a larger room. He approached it carefully, but when he reached into his back pocket, there was no wand. Hadrian peered around the doorway and drew in a breath. He walked inside, coming up behind Tom who stood there, in the middle of the room.

Riddle stood - wand out, but not his wand - over the bodies of three adults.

"Tom?"

That handsome head whipped in his direction, face outlined with anger. "What are you doing here?"

"Is this a memory or a dream?"

"Get out." That wand pointed at him.

Hadrian ignored him, moving past him to look down at the three corpses. One of them was an older image of Tom, which must have been his father, whilst the other two were much older - grandparents. Their faces were frozen in shock, mouths slack.

"Did it make you feel better?"

"Hadrian, get out. Now." Riddle's voice was dripping with rage.

"I don't want to be here," Hadrian commented, turning his back on the bodies. It was then he felt Tom's magic through the dream or memory, building. In a burst of energy, the drawing room faded into darkness and he slipped away.

***

Tom had not spoken to him all morning. It confirmed his suspicions, that much like when Riddle had ended up seeing him at the Dursleys, it had been a memory dressed as a dream. When Hadrian closed his eyes, he could still see the three dead faces, their glassy eyes staring up at the ceiling, unseeing.

During breakfast, he had sat beside Hadrian, but made no effort to engage in any conversation or answer him at all. So he had spoken to Cassius about quidditch, which caused Riddle to bite out that he was going to Charms early and left. Hadrian was surprised to feel hurt from the other boy's actions, and he had to remind himself who Tom Riddle was many times during the morning. Nevertheless, his eyes seemed to gravitate to the other Slytherin whenever there was the opportunity. Too many times had he found himself thinking back to the kiss in the Chamber. It was as if the memory of that hot mouth on his neck was burnt into his skin and mind.

After lunch, the Slytherins and Gryffindors settled into Defense Against the Dark Arts with Dumbledore. Today it was the Patronus Charm. The Professor stood at the front of his desk as he recounted what they studied last year with the spell. They had studied the theory, and today they were going to attempt it.

"...the Patronus Charm is supposedly a representation of your true self, your inner self," Dumbledore explained. "However, there have been many surprises amongst the forms some of them take."

Hadrian half-listened, scribbling a picture of a stag in the margin of his books.

"...and can only be performed by the pure of heart, able to conjure up an image of happiness. There are many studies into how those who practice Dark Arts, cannot cast a Patronus, instead get a spattering of maggots. It is claimed that Dark wizards are unable to produce a true, happy image."

Had Hadrian cast his Patronus since killing Croaker? What if he could not cast it anymore? It was bad enough that his had morphed into a dragon, of all creatures. What did that represent about himself?

"Yes, Miss Davies?"

A Gryffindor girl lowered her hand. "What is the form your Patronus takes, Sir?"

The Professor gave a slight smile. "A Phoenix." He paused. "Mr Avery?"

Cassius straightened. "How do you know what memory to choose? Is there a strength to each one?"

Dumbledore regarded the Slytherin over his half-moon spectacles.

“Yes, there is. Getting a pair of socks for Christmas may make one happy, but true happiness? It needs to be a memory that you hold dear. Your family, a loved one, a surprise...the list may go on.”

Soon, the questions died down and Dumbledore gave them time to think about the memory which they were going to pick. Nervousness was bubbling in his stomach, not wanting his wand to explode with maggots. All he had going round his head was the image of Ron spewing up slugs, until the slugs transformed into maggots. He grimaced and turned his attention on Dumbledore, who was encouraging them to go out into the wide, open space of the classroom that had been cleared for them to practice.

Hadrian stayed sitting a while longer, watching as the Slytherins slid over to their private areas, whilst the Gryffindors grouped together. He saw the worry etched on his Housemates faces, probably worried as well that they would get maggots.

Again, it was Tom that drew his attention. He was furthest away from everyone, lips pressed together and looking down at his wand.

He closed his book and made the decision to walk over to Riddle. Cinnamon eyes flickered to him, but the boy did not say anything. Hadrian stood next to him.

“It took me a while to cast a Patronus. I went for the memory of riding my broom for the first time but it was nowhere near strong enough.” Hadrian paused, looking down at his wand. “Then different ones but none as strong as I needed. Half of it is self-confidence you can pull it off, just *knowing* without a doubt. Then, the other half is the strongest and happiest memory. But no one seems to understand how difficult it is for orphans to have nice memories.” He raised his wand, knowing Riddle was listening. “I chose the memory of leaving the Dursleys, finally finding out that I wasn’t a freak.”

Hadrian began to circle with his wand, focusing his mind. But when he uttered the spell, nothing happened. No maggots did either.

“I take it that was supposed to be a Patronus,” Tom drawled.

He frowned. “Maybe that memory is not as strong as it once was.” Hadrian rocked back on his heels, scratching his chin with his other hand. There was one memory that kept repeating in his mind, time and time again. His cheeks heated with the images that raced through his mind, but he focused on the sensations that it elicited.

“ *Expecto Patronum*,” he said, jutting his wand out. Hadrian gasped as the energy zapped through his body and a huge, silvery dragon burst from the end.

Then laughter bubbled out of his mouth, relief making his eyes sting. No maggots. His Patronus remained. Hadrian watched with a grin as the whole class stopped and watched the beautiful beast soar across the top of the classroom before it swooped down to land in front of Riddle.

Tom’s hand twitched, as if he wanted to touch it. Hadrian’s eyes met his, and then he felt a too familiar probe at the front of his mind. The image of his back up against the glass flitted through his mind, the mouth on his before trailing down his neck…biting…sucking.

Hadrian shoved Riddle out, his eyes wide and horrified as Tom’s mouth curved into a sinister smile. “How dare you-”

The Patronus was gone.

“Mr Peverell,” Dumbledore said, walking over. His robes were clashing shades of lilac and mustard yellow, rustling as he approached. The older wizard’s face was unreadable. “I have never seen such a fully-formed Patronus by someone your age.”

Hadrian tore his eyes from Tom. “My tutor taught me after I had some troubles with dementors when I was thirteen.”

“Thirteen?” Dumbledore stroked his beard. “How interesting. Could you help your peers?”

He rocked on his feet. “Uh, sure.” Frowning, he watched as Dumbledore whisked over to his desk and started to scribble down something on some parchment. Did Dumbledore have notes on him? Perhaps his Invisibility Cloak needed to make an appearance…but then the wizard had always seemed to sense Hadrian under it.

“That was really amazing,” Cassius said as he came over.

Hadrian offered a faint smile, turning his attention over to the handsome blonde. “Thanks.”

“Could you help me?”

“Sure.” Hadrian turned into his teaching mode that he had used with the DA. “Take a good posture…yes.” He raised his hands, placing them

on Cassius' shoulders to pull them back, straightening his back. "Be aware you will not cast a full Patronus your first time, it may be a wisp or a shield. Have you got a memory?"

Suddenly, Hadrian felt the energy of the classroom shift. He spun around, just as Tom raised his wand and uttered: " *Expecto Patronum* ."

He expected nothing from Riddle, nothing because Riddle only knew darkness...not happiness. At most, if it did work, maybe a dribble of a non-corporeal Patronus with his first time. But no.

Hadrian's mouth fell open as a large serpent flew from the tip of the yew wand. It did not fly across the classroom, but instead slithered over to Hadrian, circling him as if eyeing him up as prey. Hadrian did not look at the snake, but at Tom's triumphant face. And something broke within him. He felt his throat close up. Tom had a happy memory. Although curiosity burned within Hadrian on what that memory was, he found himself offering a proud smile towards the other Slytherin.

The snake disappeared into a silvery mist, and Hadrian closed the distance between them (forgetting his work with Cassius). Those wine-coloured eyes followed his movements.

"Tom, that was…" He trailed off, unsure of what word was strong enough.

"Are you still angry with me?"

The words were soft and quiet, only for Hadrian's ears. Angry? Riddle had invaded his mind without permission, and seen the embarrassing memory that his subconscious deemed to be one of his happiest. However, Tom had created a fully-formed Patronus, and the hope Hadrian had now was stronger than any other emotion he could summon.

"No. Well done." Hadrian gave him a broad smile. "I don't want you to do that again to me...those are my memories to offer, not to take. But I am proud of you."

Something flickered in Tom's expression before his eyes shot up to look behind Hadrian.

"Mr Riddle." Dumbledore.

“Yes, Professor Dumbledore?” Tom’s mouth slid into a smug smile, his wand hanging loosely from his grip.

“What a wonderful job both of you have done.”

Hadrian could barely hide his own smile as he watched Dumbledore give grudging praise to Riddle. The rest of the class were chatting amongst themselves, eyeing Tom and Hadrian whilst their House looked on at them both with admiration and respect.

***

Everyone had been abuzz with the rumours that Tom and Hadrian had conjured full Patronuses in Defense. Throughout dinner, the Slytherins recounted the look on Dumbledore’s face and grumbled about how he had not even offered them any house points for the spectacles of magic. Tom had soaked up the attention and Hadrian just found himself smiling.

Not only was it a myth about the whole maggots, but Riddle had managed to find something to be *happy* about. Although, he felt wary about what memory the other boy did choose. Was it the death of his family, like he had seen in their shared dream/memory? Or was it realising how powerful he was in the future? Hadrian still did not like the idea of Riddle seeing the memory he had used, especially because it involved Tom directly. When had that become such a positive memory for him?

Hadrian knocked on the door to the Defense classroom an hour after dinner. He had brought his homework with him, like the note required him to.

“Enter.”

He opened and closed the door behind him. Dumbledore stood by a window, looking down over the grounds as the sun set in the distance. One of his hands smoothed down his beard, but his eyes did not leave the sight.

“Sit down, Mr Peverell, and you may begin on your homework.”

Biting the inside of his cheek, Hadrian took his usual desk and began

to work on his Herbology essay draft. *Draft* . Months after being here, he still marvelled at the idea of drafting his work. His grades had climbed up from just above average, to matching those of Abraxas, in all of his subjects. The only one consistently higher was Tom, but he just seemed to absorb knowledge. Not getting involved with Quidditch was one way he was clawing back time, along with studying whilst helping Riddle.

An hour later, Hadrian paused to read through his work and make amendments. Lost in his own world, he had not been aware that Dumbledore had moved back to sit at his desk.

“Mr Peverell.”

Emerald eyes rose. He blinked, placing down the essay. “Yes, Sir?”

“I have found myself replaying our last lengthy interaction in my head many times; the time you sought me out in my Office for information about Gellert Grindelwald.” Dumbledore’s hands were clasped together on his desk, his light blue eyes studying the raven-haired boy opposite. “I am fearful that I am watching an echo of time…a portentous reflection.”

Hadrian frowned. “I don’t understand, Sir.”

“How much do you know about the tragic events which unfolded last year?” Dumbledore enquired. “Sherbert lemon?” He offered a bowl out.

“No, thank you.” Hadrian rested back in the wooden chair. “You mean the death of Myrtle Warren? Was she not killed by an acromantula?” He forced his face into impassivity, knowing that was the story of ‘truth’ believed by everyone but Dumbledore. Hagrid was innocent. He knew that and loved Hagrid, but the half-Giant also did have a terrible habit of bringing very dangerous creatures into the school.

“An acromantula was discovered in school.”

“I see.” He shrugged. “I do not understand what this has to do with me, Professor.”

Dumbledore sighed. “Do you remember me telling you that Grindelwald draws people in by making them feel special, but he holds them in contempt?”

“Yes, Sir.” He rested back in the wooden chair.

“You have to be careful who you give your trust too, Mr Peverell. Some will use the power you wield, for their own advantages.”

He smiled softly. “Are you trying to warn me about Tom?”

Dumbledore stared back at him. “Tom is a very good student, a powerful wizard. Sometimes, that power can be too addictive and can get out of control. You could be a challenge to him.”

Hadrian’s fingers played with the end of the quill on his desk. “You are powerful, Sir. Do you speak from experience?” He inwardly smirked at the slight widening of the older man’s eyes.

The Deputy Headmaster unwrapped a sherbert lemon, discarding the paper wrapper next to the delicate glass bowl. “In my youth, I allowed power to get to me, reel me in. You know of my...old friend. He is persuasive in his vernacular.”

“Everyone expects you to get rid of him.”

Dumbledore popped the sweet into his mouth. “It is easier for people to put the responsibility of someone’s demise onto someone else. It makes it easier for them to come to terms with death.”

“But you said that he can be redeemed. You do not plan to kill him.” Hadrian’s hand twitched with the older man’s words. Oh, they were so true, and Dumbledore fell victim to the same systems he was chastising others for. It was easier to position Harry to kill Voldemort. Less blood on his hands.

“You are unhappy with that?”

His eyes flashed up, mouth pulling taut. “You do not offer Tom the same redemption that you so freely give to Grindelwald, who has killed so many. I find that hypocritical.” He shifted in his chair and watched almost with satisfaction as an uncomfortable expression wormed its way onto Dumbledore’s face. “You seem more scared of a seventeen-year-old boy than a god-knows-how-old megalomaniac.”

The Professor was silent for a while, and he studied Hadrian. “I see much of Grindelwald within him.”

Hadrian’s upper lip curled. “And yet you befriended Grindelwald after he was thrown out of Durmstrang for Dark magic. You believed in him. You both shared ideologies, at least for a while. And you are trying to tell me to be careful, and *warn* me about Tom?” He shook his

head. “Have you considered the damage *you* have done as the first member of the magical community to meet Tom? You offer an orphan no insight into his family, who has believed he is a ‘freak’ all of his life. No words of comfort or encouragement. Instead, you reveal him to be a thief; in an existence where nothing has ever been his. No childhood toys, or books favoured by his mother or father. He asks you about speaking to snakes, and you offer him your judgement and silence. His years at Hogwarts, seeking to please and find home. You offer him distance and scrutiny.”

He sat there, after the words poured from his mouth, his body trembling. It was too late to withdraw those words. It was too late to weigh up the consequences over revealing that much information. Information he should not really know. Of course, Dumbledore would put Hadrian’s accusations down to what Tom had told him, from *Tom’s* perspective. But that did not mean it was not right.

The most amazing thing was that Dumbledore was speechless. What could one say back to that? Reject it? Discipline him for speaking out of turn?

“Go back to your Common Room, Hadrian.” There was a weariness that he had never heard in the future-Headmaster’s voice, tinged with something Hadrian could not quite put his finger on - regret, confusion? Maybe a mixture of both.

Hadrian packed up his things and hesitated before leaving. Dumbledore was staring thoughtfully into a clear, crystal ball on the edge of his desk.

“Sir?” Those blue eyes did not rise to meet his. Hadrian shifted awkwardly. “I am sorry if I have spoken out of turn. I understand where your concern comes from. But...if we don’t offer those who are lost, a little bit of light, what hope is there?”

With that, he left.

Chapter 28

Chapter Notes

> Warning: The Explicit rating comes into effect from this chapter onwards.
>
> Thank you all for the amazing comments and support along the way. The Hufflepuff girls definitely represent us Harry/Tom shippers, and this is a dedication to you all. This is a pause in all of the seriousness and I hope you all like it.
>
> A lot of you are wondering what is going on in Tom's mind, and I would say - a lot. A lot is going on, and you will be in on the action...just not yet.
>
> We are getting to a very big moment...and I am nervous with the risk! I just hope it pays off and continues to be the fiction you like!

To say his head was a mess, was an understatement. Yesterday, the detention with Dumbledore had taken a bizarre turn of events, where it seemed as if he had forced the older wizard to reevaluate his actions in regards to Tom. Of course, he could not tell Tom what had happened. Tom would deny that was how he felt - abandoned, vulnerable and in need of love. Hadrian could see it. He had felt it himself... *still* felt it.

However, there were doubts plaguing his mind. Did he say too much? Did he let anything slip that would make Dumbledore suspicious? The guilt and fear ate at his stomach.

Hadrian also had his mind on bigger things than the current curriculum. Binns was droning on about another bloody Goblin war, so it allowed him to focus on the next issue on his growing list. Friday was the Ministry function.

He did not trust Tom not to do something to ‘incapacitate’ him into not being there Friday. His guard needed to be up.

That was why he had been late to the lesson, and had slid into a desk at the front of the room, where the Hufflepuffs had gathered. He had received odd looks all around, but he simply got out a book he had fished out from the Restricted Section this morning, under the guise of

his Cloak, and started to read it. Hermione would have given him such a disappointed look at his behaviour, even though she knew how boring Binns was. Ron, would just be confused why Harry wasn't using the time to sleep, instead of *reading* . A pang of loss rang deep in his chest at the memories of his friends.

He never even said 'goodbye'. Maybe the time line had not changed that much. Maybe… Hadrian's shoulders straightened at the 'what if' thoughts going through his head. It was useless. He was here now, in 1944. That was the current situation. But he could hope that the future 'Harry Potter' born, would still find his two friends.

Half an hour into the lesson, Hadrian had scribbled a page of notes. A lot of it was on protective charms, but this was for the mind. If Grindelwald *did* make an appearance, then his mind needed to be absolutely rock tight. Dumbledore was an expert Legilimens. Grindelwald possibly would be too. The thing keeping him safe at Hogwarts, was that Dumbledore was a respectable Professor who would/could not enter a student's mind without serious repercussions. If Grindelwald found out he was from the future...or anything about that...it would be a disaster. However, his *want* for the Elder Wand was a stronger pull than any preservation about the future. The image of Death still haunted his dreams. He still felt the chill in his lungs from the appearance of the dark specter. He had too much to do in this time period, to allow a curious spirit to whisk him away from it all. Death itself, he did not fear...but the representation of it was awful.

Defeating Grindelwald may be his only chance of getting the Elder Wand. There was no way he would be able to 'win' it from Dumbledore. Grindelwald was a bit more unhinged, and Hadrian was an unknown.

Something hit his leg and fell to the ground. There was a sharp intake of breath behind him.

Hadrian snatched the folded piece of parchment up, just as it seemed to be on its way again. Should he try and find its owner? His eyes flickered over the Hufflepuffs, but no one was looking at him.

He unfolded the letter, taking note of a quiet whimper he heard somewhere behind him.

'*My sister said that Tom stopped Hadrian from falling down the stairs the other day.'* The handwriting was very neat, the ink charmed with blue

glitter.

Hadrian froze on the first line of the scribbled conversation. What the hell?

'*Oh Merlin, how romantic! I wish I had seen it!'* A different coloured ink - pink.

'*Do you think they have had an argument? Why is he not sitting with Tom*?'

'*They argue a lot. They are such passionate people. Imagine the kissing…*'

'*Tom has not taken his eyes off Hadrian all lesson. He is pining. Hard.*'

His eyes were huge as he drank in the words on the parchment. Some Hufflepuffs thought that Tom and he were in a relationship? Did the Slytherins? Tom had told Dippet and Dumbledore they were for their cover, but in a private conversation. Unless the portraits had been gossiping again. Hadrian's cheeks were hot and his stomach was churning at the written notes. The idea of Tom staring at him all through the lesson…

The notes continued…

'*Poor Tom (unless he is the reason Hadrian is upset!). I swear, last night I could still feel their magic tingling all around me from the play.*'

'*I bet you could! Anyway, that girl I know in Slytherin? She said that they are not 'out' with their relationship. Either, they are keeping it a secret or they are not actually together yet! From what she has told me...I think it is the latter!*'

There was a shocked face drawing in pink ink, then: '*No way! Are they blind? They clearly fancy the pants off each other*.' 'Pants' had a multitude of lines scribbled underneath.

Hadrian screwed the note up in his hand, having gotten to the end of the transactions between the Hufflepuffs. He swallowed hard and his face burned. People were *gossiping* about the nature of his and Tom's relationship? It really was not that interesting. At all.

Besides, he did not fancy the pants off Riddle. Riddle and his stupidly perfectly coiffed hair...and stupidly soft lips…and that delicious, dark spicy scent he had... Hadrian closed his eyes. This was bad. Dumbledore had warned him that people like Tom pulled others into

his orbit with good looks and power. It was all a game to him. It kept people in line, wanting to please him. He could not afford to fall too deep into Riddle's hands, unless he wanted the agony of heartbreak.

Perhaps he should focus his attention on something else or someone else. Cassius? He missed the warmth of his friend. His mind drifted to when they had laid together on Hadrian's bed. There was no way he could imagine Tom doing that to him. Regardless, he could not string Cassius along, not when any relationship between them could only be casual and with a time limit. It was not fair to either of them.

Hadrian sniffed, eyes flicking up to Binns whose ghostly eyelid were half closed, as if his own ramblings were sending him to sleep. He rolled his eyes and turned his attention back to his book, although this time he was hyper-aware of the Hufflepuffs surrounding him.

***

"Walk with me."

Hadrian sighed, eyes gravitating to Tom. "I have detention soon." His stomach was lightly full with dinner, and he just wanted to mentally prepare himself for the next round of Dumbledore's questioning.

"It won't take long, and I will make sure you get there on time." Tom's face was an impassive mask, as he stood by the bench of the Slytherin table.

His mouth twisted and he got to his feet. They both walked out of the Hall, Hadrian matching Tom's pace, even though the other Slytherin's legs were longer. Emerging out into the Entrance Hall, they were about to walk out into the Grounds when a gasping noise brought their steps to a halt.

A red-faced girl had her eyes wide and fearful. She was gasping in deep breaths like she had been running for a while. "Please, my friend! Quick!"

Tom quirked an eyebrow. "Get a Professor."

As her eyes brimmed with tears, Hadrian gave Tom a quick glare. "What is it?"

“A snake!”

Tom whisked off in the direction the young girl had come from and Hadrian followed after. The girl caught up and started to run on ahead, her ginger curls bouncing at her back. Hadrian looked up at Tom’s pale face when he caught up.

“*Do you think it is Una*?” he asked.

“*I hope not. Best case scenario is Onyx*,” Riddle hissed back. “*But he should know better than to terrorise students*.”

They were in the area of the disused classrooms, passing the portrait of the beautiful mermaids and mermen. The girl stopped at an open door, stepping away from it in fear.

Riddle frowned. “A cupboard?”

Hadrian came between them. “Is your friend inside?”

She tearfully nodded her head. “There was a hiss and something took her. I think I saw a snake. You both can help her right? You both speak Parseltongue.”

“Everything will be fine. Just stay here,” Hadrian replied, trying to placate the stressed student. He took his wand, casting a wordless ‘ *Lumos* ’ before entering.

It was a cupboard, with some brooms stashed in the corner and some cleaning products on the shelves. A thin table against the wall. Some candles and matches. Metal handcuffs attached to the wall? It did not take him long to reach the back, where there was just a stone wall. He pressed a hand to it.

Hadrian released an embarrassingly high pitched noise as something brushed him. He whipped around to see Riddle behind him. “What are you doing, sneaking up on me like that?” he hissed.

Tom opened his mouth to answer but the door suddenly slammed behind them. He released a disgruntled noise, striding over in the dark to try the door knob. Nothing happened. Riddle knocked on the door. No answer. Suddenly, Hadrian’s wand stopped glowing and everything plunged into darkness.

“Can you open the door?” Tom asked, seemingly trying to communicate with the girl outside.

Hadrian was trying to get his wand to work but nothing was happening. Then, they both froze at the sound of more than one voice outside.

"...wasn't supposed to do that!" came one high, scared voice.

"Where did you even find that spell?" another girl asked.

"It was in one of my auntie's books...one I stole from her 'special' section. Oh Merlin, what if they are stuck there forever?" This girl's voice was getting steadily more panicked.

Hadrian clenched his teeth. He strode over to the door, pushing back Riddle in the dark. Thumping on the door with his fist, he said, "Let us out, now!"

There was silence. Then: "Oh we are so sorry! We just wanted you to make up!" The girl pretty much sobbed out the statement. The door handle rattled and rattled - from the girls on the other side - and many unlocking charms were tried. But nothing.

"We are going to get help!" was heard, before there was silence out the door.

Hadrian's heart was echoing in his ears as both of them stood in the thick darkness of the broom cupboard. He pinched his nose and cursed himself. "I am such an *idiot* ."

"I think this would make us both the idiots," Tom's voice drawled behind him.

"No, I am. They were bloody Hufflepufss! They have an *obsession* with us."

"What?" There was a slight inflection of disbelief in his voice.

"I caught a note in History of Magic this morning. Apparently, they - and others - are under the illusion that we are in a relationship." Hadrian was so glad that it was dark, and that the other boy could not see the colour rising in his face. "They were *sad* that it looked like we had an argument."

"But those girls who did this were fifth years, or at least one was."

"This obsession seems to have spread. A girl talked about how her sister was saying how you 'saved' my life on the staircase the other

day. It is ridiculous."

"So, that is what they meant by getting us to 'make up'?"

Riddle's tone was unreadable. Hadrian just made an affirmative noise.

"My magic is not working."

"Neither is mine," Hadrian sighed. "I think there are some candles about." He blindly reached out for where he knew the shelves were. There was a distinct dusty and disused smell that sunk into his nostrils like an unwanted perfume. He wrinkled his nose, hands hitting the shelves and he counted them before feeling across where he had seen the candles and matches on the second shelf. When his hands closed around the thick, wax bodies of the candles, he withdrew one.

"Hold this," Hadrian said, offering the candle to the darkness.

There was a rustling of robes before the candle was taken from his hands. Hadrian next plucked the box of matches, half-surprised to see something so Muggle. Then again, Mr Pringle, the Caretaker was a Squib and would need items like this. It took a few attempts to grasp a matchstick out of the tub. He located the rough patch on the side of the box and ignited the first match.

Ablaze, he could see flickers of Tom's irritated face as he drew the flame closer to the other boy - guiding it down to the candle in his hands. It took them ten minutes to light all of the candles, and place them on the thin desk next to the wall. They had pushed them up against the wall and discarded their school robes, as to reduce the possibility of setting fire to anything - including themselves. All of the candles threw enough light to see each other and a bit of the surrounding cupboard. It was small, enough to fit maybe five people. Tom had been silent throughout the whole process.

There was a sudden knock on the door. "Mr Riddle? Mr Peverell?" Dippet.

"Yes, we are in here," Hadrian called. "Can you let us out?"

A pause. "We are working on it. A small group of students, with good intentions, have used a spell unknown to us." Another pause. "We are going to try and contact the student's aunt for the book in which it came from."

Hadrian grimaced. "We can't use magic. But we have some candles

lit."

"Yes, yes...well, make yourselves comfortable. This could take a little while, but we will be working on getting you out."

Hadrian's eyes widened as he heard footsteps moving away. "Hello? Dippet? Hello? Anybody?"

Nothing.

"Fucking hell." Hadrian spun around, yanking a hand through his hair. "This is ridiculous."

Riddle moved over to the shelves and looked at the cleaning solutions, then at the brooms. He then moved to the back of the cupboard, nearest to the candles and leant on the wall. His arms crossed over his chest. "We should use this time to talk."

Hadrian watched the candle light flicker across the handsome planes of the other boy's face, casting shadows in the hollows. "About what?"

"You, avoiding me. What did Dumbledore say to you?" Tom's eyes were dark and heavy. "Did he say how bad I was? How you should keep away? Did it scare you?"

He looked away. "I don't want to talk about this, Riddle."

"Back to my last name again? I think the old coot did a number on you," Riddle sneered.

Hadrian eyed the Heir of Slytherin and felt his irritation flee his body. Of course Tom would be paranoid. This was a boy whose first experience with the wizarding world was Albus Dumbledore, who judged him forever for stealing some trinkets. "He tried to warn me about you...but I know you more than he does. Dumbledore tried to use the lessons he had learnt from his relationship with Grindelwald, but...it did not go his way."

"Show me?"

Hadrian raised an eyebrow. "If you had not noticed, no magic." He gestured to the closet around them.

"Let me try."

He took a step back. "I don't think you would want to see it."

Riddle moved away from the wall, eyes glimmering. “Why? How do I know you are not just feeding Dumbledore information about me?”

Hadrian’s chin jutted up. “You bastard. You accuse me of *lying*? I have shown you my entire experiences with you in the future.” He switched to Parseltongue. “*I killed a man in front of you. I took a huge risk by allowing you to see the future*.”

“Oh, Hadrian, you have gifted me with much more than that,” Riddle purred as he moved closer. “I apologise for accusing you...but I would still like to see, to see you put Dumbledore in his place.”

His breath caught in the back of his throat and his scar warmed with the other boy’s close proximity. “Tom…”

Fingertips took his chin, holding him in place. “Can I?”

Hadrian’s tongue swiped out to wet his bottom lip. “Yes...but it won’t work, Tom,” he breathed, watching as Riddle’s cinnamon eyes dropped to track the movement of his tongue.

There was a slight twitch in his mind and then...everything from the detention played like a series of quick images in his brain. Hadrian re-watched as Dumbledore stopped his detention...the warning about Tom...then Hadrian taking control of the conversation...Dumbledore’s silence…

“How?” Hadrian rasped, as Tom withdrew from his mind. “No magic.”

Tom’s eyes searched his. “I am not a victim, Hadrian.”

He swallowed. “I know, but we both suffered. We were both left in a judgemental, Muggle world. Dumbledore needed to know his mistakes. But how? How did that work?”

Another hand came up to brush against his scar. A tremble slid down the smaller male’s back. “We share something deeper, which allows us to dream...see into each other’s minds. Beyond normal magic,” Riddle breathed. “Because you are mine.”

Before Hadrian could ask, or say anything - a mouth took his. It was not soft. Their lips parted instantly and their tongues slid against each other. It was hot...demanding… Hadrian’s hands gripped Riddle’s robes, tethering him to the other Slytherin.

Tom's hands left Hadrian's face, drifting down to his hips, pushing him backwards. A gasp tumbled from the emerald-eyed boy as his back hit the door, Riddle's mouth kissing upwards to his ear.

"I saw you that night." A small bite to his earlobe elicited another shudder from him. "You watched me in that classroom."

Hadrian drew in a rough breath as the memory flew through his mind of that Ravenclaw on his knees, in front of Tom. Tom's head back, face bathed in moonlight… His stomach pooled with heat, and something else. Jealousy? He turned his head and captured Tom's mouth again. It was a fierce fight of domination. At one point, Hadrian was sure he could taste blood but he did not care. He drew his hands up and threaded them through Tom's perfect hair, mussing it as he anchored his mouth to the other Slytherin's.

With a hiss, Tom tore his mouth away and his bit down on Hadrian's lower lip, extracting a whimper from the smaller male. He then sucked gently on the abused flesh, and Hadrian's grip lessened on his hair.

Hadrian's head spun, but when Riddle started to kiss down his face, jaw and then down to his neck...he shoved the other male away. A spark of satisfaction ignited in his gut at the rumpled look of the usually stoic-looking Tom - dark hair ruffled and lips reddened from their kissing.

"No," Hadrian rasped. "You are not just putting hickeys on my neck to embarrass me again."

Despite Hadrian's words, Tom's lips curved up in a smile. "Oh, *Hadrian* , they are never there to embarrass you." He stepped closer again, staring down at the smaller male as he stroked a finger down the pale, slender column of his neck.

Hadrian swallowed before forcing out a laugh. "Yeah, right." He averted his eyes, not able to look into those brown-red eyes that were fiery coals in the darkness.

"I am just laying claim to what is mine."

"I am no one's."

A kiss was placed on his neck, right over the pulse of his jugular. "Mine."

He gave a disgruntled noise, barging past Tom to storm over to the back of the small cupboard, nearer to the candles. “Stop playing games with me Tom. They may work on your Followers, but not me.”

Tom was shadowed in darkness, the light only reaching parts of his face and his loose, white shirt. “No games are being played, Hadrian.”

“Then what is this?” he bit out. “I am prophesied to *kill* you; we are enemies in the future. I don’t get why you…” he trailed off, swallowing the lump in his throat.

“Why I kiss you? Why I mark you? Why no one else is allowed near you?” Tom stepped closer with each question, and Hadrian was trapped at the back of the cupboard. The taller Slytherin lifted a hand, smoothing raven hair away from the younger male’s forehead. He leant down and pressed a kiss to the lightning bolt.

The cry tumbled from Hadrian’s lips before he could stop it. His nerves were suddenly molten fire, tingling all the way down to his groin. What caused him pain to rival the Cruciatus Curse in the future, now caused the complete opposite reaction. He gasped in a shaking breath as he felt his magic core straining to merge with Tom’s. Despite not being able to cast anything, their magic swirled in the space between them.

“This is why,” Riddle breathed in his ear. “Your magic.” A pause. “Our magic.” Another pause as a kiss was pressed to his jaw. “How everything seems more *real* ever since you arrived.”

“I can’t do this,” Hadrian uttered, emerald eyes wide and staring into darkened cinnamon.

“Why not?” A kiss to the side of his mouth.

“This isn’t the way things are supposed to be.”

“No? You changed that when you came here, Hadrian,” Riddle whispered. Another kiss to the other side of his mouth. “Every part of me demands that you are mine. Tell me that you do not feel the same.”

He grabbed Tom’s shirt and pulled him close. Their mouths smashed together in another fierce battle for control. Tom used his weight to press the smaller male into the wall to the side of them, his hands taking Hadrian’s and pinning them above his head. The movement dislodged a moan from Hadrian, which was greedily swallowed by the

other Slytherin before Tom's hips surged forward, grinding their erections together.

"Fuck," Hadrian gasped out, tearing his mouth away for air. His head hit the stone wall behind him, causing shards of pain to mix with the pleasure. He lifted his hips up in response, meeting Tom's hardness as he struggled against the hands that pinned his to the wall. All he wanted to do was touch…

Riddle's mouth withdrew, and it pleased Hadrian to see the other male breathing heavily, his eyes heavy. "What do you want, Hadrian?" he purred.

Avada Kedavra eyes flashed at him. "You know what I want."

Tom smiled, sliding his lower body against his, drawing a moan from the smaller male. "I want to hear it from you. I want to hear you *beg* for it."

Hadrian squirmed, moving his arms to try and shove him off. However, a thigh slid between his and raised, pressing against his throbbing erection. All of his senses zeroed in on that area as Riddle's thigh rhythmically pressed against him, coaxing more sounds from him. He bit down on his lower lip to try and stifle them. But then he felt something cold against his wrists and Tom completely withdrew.

"What?" Hadrian's eyes were wide as he tried to move his hands, but they were cuffed, the metal's iciness biting into his skin. He looked up to see that he was chained to the Victorianesque shackles. Pulling at them, they gave no sign of releasing him, so he turned his glare to Tom. "What are you doing?" he hissed. "Get these off me."

Riddle's lips were still curled up in that infuriating smile. "There does not seem to be a key."

He froze, mouth opening and then closing before he glanced at the door. "Riddle - Tom," he corrected. "What if someone comes in? There has to be a key."

Tom hummed, deep in his throat, eyes running down Hadrian's prone body. "When the door opens, our magic returns." He stepped closer once more, just so that their clothes grazed. "I promise that you will be released then."

Hadrian shook his head. "What if it takes all night? Tom!" Panic tore into his voice.

A pale hand rose, brushing Hadrian's jaw before cupping it lightly. "Trust me."

"Trust you?" But Hadrian made a choked sound as Riddle slotted between his thighs again, pressing against his groin, which still ached despite the irritation he felt about the handcuffs. That strong thigh rubbed up against him, and all anger about the situation started to fade away, blurring into frustration.

Lips pressed, hot, against his neck before pain exploded as Riddle *bit* down. Hadrian's body bucked in protest as a hoarse cry escaped him, but it brought his erection against Tom's leg causing a confusing mix of pain and ecstasy. In response, the taller male sucked the flesh between his teeth and rhythmically rolled his leg against Hadrian's groin.

Hadrian squeezed his eyes shut. His senses were a jumbled mess as the pain of Tom's bite throbbed down to his trousers, where he was desperate for even more friction than what he was getting.

"Please," he breathed as Tom gently pressed his tongue against the bite.

"Please, what?"

"Tom," he keened.

"Does this hurt?" A kiss pressed to the sore bite wound.

Hadrian whimpered at the pain, trying to move his head away. However, as he did so, fingers skimmed his scar, and his body bloomed with warmth and satisfaction. Tom gave a firm lick to his neck, shards of pain slicing through the pleasure.

"Stop," he uttered.

"Mr Peverell? Mr Riddle?" Dumbledore.

Hadrian's eyes grew ridiculously wide as he saw Tom frown in the half-darkness. What a cock-block. He groaned, pulling at the manacles on his wrists.

"Yes, Sir?" Riddle replied, voice steady and infuriatingly unaffected.

"Are you both clear from the door? I believe I may know the counter-curse," came the reply.

Tom looked at Hadrian. “Give us a minute, Sir.”

At the silence that followed, Tom’s finger floated across Hadrian’s cheekbone. “I meant my promise. No one will see you like this but me.”

“You bit me,” Hadrian hissed.

“Did you like it?”

Emerald eyes flickered away.

Riddle smiled. “In this relationship, I expect answers when I ask for them. If you want completion…you will have to beg for it,” he whispered.

“You’re a sadist,” Hadrian bit out quietly.

“Yes, we both know that.” Tom took out his wand as he pressed a surprisingly soft kiss on Hadrian’s lips. “All right Sir, we are ready.”

Hadrian felt magic shift and Tom’s rise instantly in response. His arms fell down to his sides as the spell was released. A gasp flew from his mouth at the aching sensation from the uncomfortable position. As the door opened, Riddle handed Hadrian his robes, giving the smaller male privacy to his slowly wilting erection.

Dumbledore stood in the doorway, blue eyes regarding them both as Tom smoothed down his hair. Hadrian flushed a deep red, knowing that his hair was still in disarray and they both looked dishevelled.

“Come along, the both of you,” the Deputy Headmaster said. “Let us see Professor Dippet and give the good news.” He spun on his heel and started to walk down the corridor.

Riddle stepped back, allowing Hadrian to go first. They fell into step and silence. Hadrian’s thoughts swirled in his head. What had Tom meant by ‘in this relationship’? Luckily, his body had calmed down as he shrugged his robes on. Tom had done the same, and was back to being elegantly put together and handsome. As Hadrian’s hand fluttered up to pressed against his neck, it was caught and drawn down.

Tom did not let go. They walked after Dumbledore, holding hands. Hadrian’s heart thumped in his chest, especially when others stopped to look.

"*Do not heal it,*" Tom requested in parseltongue.

"*Why not*? *It hurts*."

His hand was squeezed lightly. "*Because I like the reminder? Don't you?*"

A sharp tingle travelled from the bite all the way down to his groin as he twisted his neck. "*I don't want everyone else to see*."

Tom muttered something under his breath, and Hadrian jumped as fur grew out of his collar, robes transfiguring into winter ones. He glared at the taller male at the unannounced use of magic, but he was glad that his neck was more hidden. Did he like the reminder? He did. There had been pain at the Dursleys, pain at the Ministry when Sirius had died, pain as *Crucio* was used on him...but never had been so mixed with something good. His attention moved to their joined hands. Tom's hand was soft and cool in his. He had never held hands with someone before. His eyes flickered up to Tom, whose breath-takingly handsome face was schooled into his usual neutral expression as they approached Dippet's Office.

Dumbledore said the password and ushered the two of them in.

Inside the Office, three fifth year Hufflepuffs were standing to the left, faces blotchy and red. Dippet was standing at his fireplace, the flames green as he attempted to communicate through Floo.

All of those faces swung to face the three as they entered.

"Armando, I remembered the counter-curse," Dumbledore said. "I believe the book was written by *Helga Hyslop* - a bit of a cult classic until everyone realised how Dark the magic was."

Dippet's mouth pressed into a line. "Yes, well, the girls are well aware of the consequences to their actions. Thank you Albus. Mr Riddle and Mr Peverell, I trust you are in good health?"

"Yes, Sir," Tom answered.

"Then, Mr Riddle, return to your evening," Dumbledore replied. "Mr Peverell, we shall attend to your detention."

He had forgotten all about that. Hadrian grimaced. Before he could say anything, Dippet cleared his throat.

“Albus, let him go for this evening. Both of them have been through a traumatic experience. Plus, we need to deal with these young ladies.” His eyes were heavy as they regarded the Slytherins.

Hadrian breathed in relief, and he regarded the elderly Headteacher. “Thank you, Sir.” Dumbledore did not look happy with the man’s decision but said nothing as both of them left before the decision was revoked.

As they left the Office, Hadrian took note that Tom still held his hand. It was not just for Dumbledore and Dippet. Nevertheless, his stomach churned as they walked away and he paused as a wave of tiredness overcame him.

“Hadrian?”

“I’m really tired,” he admitted, rubbing his eyes.

“Come, let’s go to the Common room. You have had a traumatic time,” Tom said softly.

He gave a half-hearted glare. “Mostly because of you.”

“Which we shall discuss more tomorrow, when I have all of your attention.”

They ambled down the moving staircases to the ground floor again. “Tom…what is this?” he said, tone heavy.

“I have already stated. Be aware though, Hadrian, I do not share what is mine.”

Hadrian pulled his hand away, raising an eyebrow at the taller Slytherin. “I am no one’s.”

Tom simply gave a smile. “You know that is not true.”

They descended into the dungeons and Hadrian decided to go straight to bed, leaving Tom to work on his studies with their friends. He took time to shower, to give him some relief after the incident in the cupboard and then inspected the mark on his neck. There was a circle of reddish-purple teeth marks that was already bruising. He did not heal it. Touching it was very painful, but the memories it brought up… He got changed into his pyjamas and climbed into bed, descending into a world of dreams.

Chapter 29

Chapter Notes

> Important note: I have said this before, but this may help with the chapter, that I am not including anything from the Fantastic Beasts series. So, don't expect any familiar characters from that area of the fandom. Sorry if that is disappointing!
>
> Thank you all so much for the support and for the wonderful comments! I hope you enjoy the chapter...I must admit, it was probably the hardest to write so far.
>
> A bigger note at the end!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

As they emerged from the Floo, Hadrian's eyes flitted to the immediate surroundings. It was a hallway with too many dark corners. Three other fireplaces stood next to their one, and another flared to life with green fire - two people dressed in elaborate robes emerging. Without a glance in their direction, they strode past with their pointy chins held up.

"Come along, Hadrian," Slughorn said, as he tapped a large hand on his stomach.

Emerald eyes flicked to Tom, who was already moving beside the Professor in the direction of the music and smell of food. Hadrian's mouth twisted and he fiddled with the high collar of his tight robes. The corridor was long, all pale stonework and sconces. The Ministry had not wanted to hold the event at the workplace and instead were offered the Selwyn estate to host the bash. It was an event to celebrate the Ministry, but it was clearly to raise morale in challenging times.

Either way, it was a mistake to hold it with Grindelwald still causing havoc across Europe and the Muggle war still ongoing. Speaking of the current Dark Lord, Hadrian had already run through the different scenarios if he did make an entrance. He was just a Hogwarts student. Just a seventeen year old. Grindelwald had no reason to be interested in him beyond his surname. However, Grindelwald was very much an unknown. It was that, which was making him so on edge.

He followed closely behind them, and although Tom and Slughorn were chatting like old friends about certain people who would be

making an appearance, he was glad to see Tom's eyes flickering every now and again to him.

Hadrian rubbed his tired eyes. Yesterday, there had been no opportunity to speak to Tom about their 'relationship' with each other. Tom had been asked to help Slughorn with something over lunch and Hadrian had his detention with Dumbledore in the evening where they had sat in silence. Then, he had to attend to some unfinished business, not getting back until after hours under his Cloak.

They entered a sprawling hall, worthy of a Russian Tsar. The Selywn's were one of the Sacred Twenty Eight families and rivalled the Malfoy's in wealth. Large doors were flung open on the lawns outside that were lit up. Inside the hall, it was busy with groups and dancing. There was a small stage set up, where some string instruments were being played by five long haired men.

Slughorn was blustering away with simpering greetings to various people as he made a beeline for a tight-knit group near one of the open doors. Gossamer curtains gently moved in the wind, from where they were tied back with golden string, parting to allow guests in and out. Despite the cool air filtering in, he was restless and hot. Hadrian just followed Tom. Before they had left, Slughorn had given them instructions to stay close to him for the beginning of the night, so he could suggest connections but then had given them a wink and then made a comment about them being 'of age' and able to socialise by themselves after. Hadrian had smelt the whisky on the man before they took the Floo, no doubt he wanted to go his Hogwarts business and then get on to socialising and drinking with all of his old 'connections'.

Slughorn cleared his throat outside the group he had targeted. It was a mixture of four men and a woman, dressed in very fine dark robes. One of them had a very impressive handlebar moustache.

It was he who looked at Slughorn first. His mouth curved into a smile under the moustache. "Horace! Mighty fine to see you." For a man who was quite slim, he had a deep, almost booming voice.

The group parted to ease the way for the three of them to join the fold, and yet Hadrian hung back a little. He noticed Tom eagerly pressing in.

"It's been too long, Leonard," Slughorn said, smiling. They clasped

hands and the other three people welcomed the Professor with genuine smiles and words.

“What? Five years?” This ‘Leonard’ asked, fingers rolling one side of his moustache. “Merlin, it must be!”

“Time does fly, especially for a busy Minister.” Slughorn winked. “Let me introduce you to my two wonderful students.”

“Thomas Riddle.” Tom offered the man his hand, who shook it. “It is an honour, Sir, especially with your work in Europe.”

The Minister released the Slytherin’s hand. “Thank you, Mr Riddle, and please excuse the formalities this evening. Tonight you may call me Leonard. Your words are very kind.” Clear blue eyes then turned to Hadrian, who was looking elsewhere. “And this one?”

“Hadrian Peverell,” Slughorn said, an edge of exasperation to his voice.

At the sound of his name, Hadrian snapped his focus back on the conversation. He inwardly winced at the multiple pairs of eyes on him. “Yes?”

“Hadrian, this is the Minister for Magic, Leonard Spencer-Moon.”

“Ah.” Hadrian simply gave a nod of his head. “I have heard much about you, Sir.”

Slughorn’s smile cracked a little before he turned the full charm on for his ‘old friend’. “Hadrian was travelling Europe with his mother, before he was orphaned. He has only been in England for six months.”

“I did not think there were any Peverell’s left,” the Minister commented. “It would be good to see such a respected name back on the Wizengamot at some point in the near future.”

He perked up. “It is an area I am interested in,” he admitted.

“These two boys are destined for great things,” Slughorn said. “Both hold Salazar Slytherin’s gift of Parseltongue and are able to cast a full, Corporal Patronus’!”

At the raise of the group’s eyebrows, the woman finally spoke. “You must be the ones my daughter had written to me about. Professor

Beery's disaster of a play, you two must be the Slytherins who saved the Great Hall from the fire."

Tom smiled. "That would be us. Hadrian and I have been experimenting with joint magic."

"Joint magic?" the Minister asked, a strange note to his voice.

Riddle ignored Hadrian's pointed look. "Yes, our wands are brothers."

"Outstanding!" Spencer-Moon glanced over at Slughorn. "Horace, you should have written to me about two prodigies much sooner!"

The Professor had a redness to his cheeks. "Ah, well, you are a busy man."

Hadrian glowered inside. No one knew that their wands were brothers, apart from their friends. That was not public knowledge. They had not told Dippet or Dumbledore about it, but here, Riddle had just informed the Minister of Magic like it was not a big deal. Then again, it was better that Tom was trying (and succeeding) to charm the Minister, rather than be rejected and slowly morph into the monster that was Voldemort. All of this was unknown territory. Everything was changing, more rapidly than he ever thought was possible, and it felt like the future he knew was just floating away...out of reach.

"Nonsense!" The Minister said. "You both must come along to the Ministry. I will introduce you to some very influential people. Shared magic...brother wands...I believe great things will come from the both of you."

Hadrian pursed his lips. In both time periods 'great things' were prophesied for him. He was already tired of those words. Clenching his hand into a fist, he welcomed the nips of pain as his nails embedded into his skin. To say he was in a grumpy mood, was an understatement. He was tired and on edge. Schmoozing was not on his list of priorities. That was Tom's job.

Tom was chatting away to the Ministry Officials easily, like he belonged with them, and it made Hadrian's chest ache with an emotion he could not quite identify.

Emerald eyes flickered over the guests. There were not many faces he recognised, but he felt the prickle of eyes upon him. Hadrian dragged a hand through his hair and slowly made his way into the throngs of

other guests.

A drink was offered to him by a very tall female dressed in a black, formal uniform. He took it, hoping it contained some kind of alcohol to calm his nerves. It did. The citrusy drink burned on its way down and warmth spread through his limbs.

He discarded the empty glass onto another waiter's tray as he moved towards the doors, so he could drink in the air.

"Mr Peverell?"

Freezing at the female voice, he turned to see a willowy woman standing there. She wore a tight, yellow dress that hugged every slim curve and contrasted against her tan skin. Red lips curved into a smile.

"A dance?"

He grimaced. "No thanks." Hadrian made to move, but she was quick, her fingers curling around his wrist.

"I must insist. It would be terrible manners to reject a lady's dance." She turned her wrist up to him, and a thick Deathly Hallows symbol was revealed.

"Can we just skip this part and just take me to him?"

She let out a short laugh. "I will lead you, young boy."

Hadrian allowed himself to be pulled to the dance floor. Her hands settled on his shoulders, forcing his hands onto her hips, which felt fleshy under his hands. Tom had not felt 'fleshy', but hard and strong against him… He focused on where his feet were, trying not to make such a scene.

"You think too much, just look up at me."

He grumbled under his breath and he forced his eyes up. "So, what is this? An audition? Scoping me out?"

"Maybe both," she said with that irritating smile. "You are just a boy, but we have heard information about you that interests our Lord."

"What Department do you work for then?" he asked in mock sweetness.

His question took her by surprise, where she seemed to forget where they were. But it was only a moment. “One of them.” She studied his eyes. “What is your real identity?”

He gave a snort. “Look, if this is your line of questioning, just take me to him now. This is tedious.”

“You have a lot of attitude. Someone should rip your tongue out and feed it to you,” she bit out.

A hand on her shoulder, stilled her. “Play nice, Kiera.” She was moved out of the way. Her head bowed submissively and her movements revealed a tall and attractive middle-aged man. It was not the face of Grindelwald but every one of his senses screamed it was him. The man’s magic pressed into him for one brief flash, dark and heavy. Unlike the rich spice and alluring nature of Tom’s, this was cloying and oily.

“Come, dance, little snake.” Grindelwald grinned. He took Hadrian’s waist and drew him close, making the smaller male reach up to settle hands on broad shoulders. They swept away across the floor in a swirl of robes as the magic picked up tempo.

Hadrian could not tear his eyes away from the ice-cold blue eyes that captured his. He swallowed, surprised by how his feet glided in time with the older wizard’s. “Do you dance with everyone you threaten?”

“That was not a threat, little snake.”

“Yes, because a letter from a Dark Lord promising your ‘paths will cross’ is not a threat,” Hadrian replied with a curl of his upper lip. “And it is Hadrian Peverell.”

“Ah, but it isn’t, is it?” asked the man, with his light Hungarian accent coming through. “I think I would remember hunting down a Peverell woman with a child, but I recall no such thing. Regardless, I may have use of you.”

Hadrian glowered as the man spun him before catching him back into his arms, returning to their dance. “I am not an object or a pawn.”

“Everyone is a pawn, dear snake. When you learn this, that is when you start to make your own moves in the game.” Grindelwald’s face was impassive. “How does a boy appear out of nowhere?”

“Is that a polyjuice potion you are using?”

The dark wizard chuckled. “If we were not in such a public venue, I would have tortured you by now to the point you would be begging me to know what your name is.”

Hadrian smirked. “But you wouldn’t know what name to give me, would you?”

Blue eyes sparked. “I like your bite, little snake.” They twirled. “In time, you will tell me all of those little secrets you are keeping.”

Dark eyebrows rose. “You have a ridiculous ego.”

“And you have no idea what awaits you.” Grindelwald’s hands tightened on his hips, drawing him in closer. “I have completed my checks on you. Appointments with Professor Croaker right before he dies in his home? No records of your mother, or any of your remaining family. Feats of *unnatural* magic. A mysterious curse scar from the darkest of magic.” Eyes flicked to his forehead. “I will pry every single secret from you, Hadrian, whether you submit or not. If you are truly a missing Peverell, you have my utmost interest. If not…I will have to judge your worth.”

“So, what happens now?”

“I want to see what you are made of.” Grindelwald whisked them towards the doors. “You intrigue me.” He seized Hadrian’s hand and led him out into the open air.

He gulped it into his lungs, trying not to react to the man’s touch against his skin, which felt wrong and dirty. The moon was out, stars shining and the sound of gentle chatter and glasses tinkling contrasted against the very idea that Grindelwald walked amongst them. His other hand drifted against his robes, where his wand was and he sunk into his pocket.

Suddenly, he was jerked towards Grindelwald as they descended the steps, falling into the older man. “Before you retrieve your wand, ask yourself if you want many to die tonight,” came the man’s hushed voice in his ear.

“I will not let you just take me,” Hadrian hissed.

“Little snake, you have no idea who you are dealing with.” Blue eyes pinned his.

A group of wizards ascended up the steps beside them, their laughter

causing Hadrian's throat to tighten. Grindelwald was someone they had learnt about briefly in History of Magic in the future, but Binns skimmed over it, judging it too 'macabre' to go through and too 'recent'. It would have been recent to Binns, given that he 'lived' through both Dark Lord's reigns. However, everyone referred to Voldemort as the worst Dark Lord that had ever lived. Hadrian was able to fight Voldemort. He was his prophesied enemy. Grindelwald was an unknown but Dumbledore had said there was hope for him.

If a fight started now, people would die. If Grindelwald took him...he would be a hostage and his life would be at a considerable risk. How *had* he seen this night going? He should have planned more. Instead, he had been stuck in a cupboard with Tom Riddle and Dumbledore had wasted his time in numerous detentions in the evening. What he wanted, was on Grindelwald's person and this could be his only opportunity. It was him the Dark Lord was interested in, no one else. He suddenly felt like a child in an adult's game. A mere pawn.

His hand closed in on his wand. "Let me go."

Grindelwald smiled, a sharp edge to the sides. "So be it, little snake." He pushed Hadrian away.

Hadrian stumbled on the steps, but his wand was already in his hand and he whipped it out. A red spell crashed against the shield he instantly erected.

Screams rose up across the gardens.

Hadrian straightened, to see the Elder Wand in Grindelwald's hand as the man conjured a lick of blue flame that crashed against his shield and shattered it. He cast a wandless '*Expelliarmus*' but the man disarmed the spell like it was from a child.

There were people running about in their fancy attire, wands being drawn. Grindelwald's followers stepped out to defend their leader and glimmers of spells caught Hadrian's peripheral vision. His hand tightened on his wand. "*Protego*," he hissed in Parseltongue. The shielding charm had a green tint to it as it rose around him, deflecting another lick of blue flame sent his way, successfully this time. Although, the Elder Wand was strong, and had cracked through his defenses.

Grindelwald grinned. "Let me see your venom, little snake." He threw a wandless, green curse that shattered his shield once more.

Hadrian snarled, jumping down the remaining steps to the grass. He threw out a *Sectumsempra* - deflected. Then another - deflected. Grindelwald took his surprise and sent a blue fireball to the hall. Screams ascended and Hadrian could only watch in horror as a man stumbled out of the door he had emerged out of only minutes ago, face and clothes on fire. The anguished cries were something he knew he would never forget.

Tom was in there…

Hadrian made a move towards the hall, but stopped when another spell was shot his way by the Dark Lord. He ducked, smacking his knee against the stone wall. Hissing through his teeth, he fired another spell but it was useless.

He rose and cast an '*Expulso*' in Parseltongue - not at Grindelwald, but the ground in front of him. Stone and dirt exploded up six or seven storeys in the air. The pieces of flooring curved together like giant snakes before falling down. Hadrian did not watch as Grindelwald erected a shield to protect him, instead he took the knife from his pocket and sliced down into his palm.

As the droplets hit the ground, he muttered the spell, initiating the blood magic he had picked up from one of Salazar Slytherin's books. Each one of the drops of his blood wriggled and grew, tubular in shape. Hadrian threw himself to the floor to avoid another spell aimed at him. He drew his head up to see five monstrous snakes rising up, fangs dripping in the moonlight. Bigger than Nagini, not as big as a Basilisk.

"*Kill him*," he hissed, looking straight at Grindelwald who was covered in a sheen of dirt and surrounded by huge chunks of stone and dirt.

The Dark Lord eyed the snakes, throwing his head back and laughing gleefully. Hadrian studied the Elder Wand as Grindelwald battled the snakes. Many of the battling wizards had moved away from the dark wizard, especially at the sight of the conjured beasts. Just as Hadrian was about to attack Grindelwald, a spell whizzed across his arm, skimming the flesh. He yelled in pain, spinning around to see the woman in the yellow dress.

"Fuck." Hadrian threw a litany of curses in her direction. She evaded and dodged until he sent a *Sectumsempra* in her direction right after an innocent '*Stupefy*'. A scream exploded from her mouth as her wand arm was sliced off, hitting the ground with a thump.

He had no time to react as ropes encompassed his body, pinning his arms to his sides. Hands grabbed him, turning him around to see Grindelwald's borrowed face leering at him. There was a cut below his left eye and he was covered in blood from the snakes, which brought Hadrian some pleasure.

"Hadrian!"

Tom .

Suddenly, his magic burst to life and he turned his head from Grindelwald to see Tom running out of the burning manor. *He was lending Hadrian his magic through their connection*. Hadrian's heart thumped at the revelation. And Tom looked perfect. His black hair was in disarray and eyes wide...but perfect. He sagged at the waist, having thrown as much power as possible to help Hadrian.

But that was short lived. There was a wand moving behind Tom, magic building at its tip. Hadrian pulled his magic - the magic that Tom had given him - and instead of freeing himself, he cast the strongest *Avada Kedavra* he could at the woman about to hit Riddle. The emerald light made a direct hit, and the woman crumpled to the ground.

"That is wonderful, little snake." Hadrian gasped as the ropes tightened and his wand fell from his grasp, into Grindelwald's waiting hand. "Sleep."

The last thing that Hadrian saw was Tom's handsome face morphing into one of fury...and then nothing.

Chapter End Notes

So...this was the big angst I had spoken about! Fight scenes are never my strongest area.

Please let me know what you think, as this is obviously a major turning point!

Also, what would you guys think about it now splitting off, so you can see Tom and Hadrian's POVs?

Chapter 30

Chapter Notes

> Wow! Thank you all so much for your comments last chapter; I know it was pretty explosive plot-wise! They have been a delight to read and really do mean a lot.
>
> I must apologise for the late chapter. The weather here has been horrendous for concentrating and I will never post a chapter I am not happy with, or isn't my best.
>
> I hope you enjoy this installment, let me know!

Drip. Drip. Drip.

Hadrian came too with a jolt. A cry escaped his lips as pain flourished all the way along his back where it was connected to a hard surface. He rolled over, coughing as his eyes darted around to his immediate surroundings. There was a dull ache in his head and it took a few moments for him to concentrate on anything.

It was a cell, dimly lit by fire encased behind a transparent panel on the wall running across the middle of the opposite side to where he lay. There was a window with bars, but it was tiny. It was not big enough for him to climb out, even if he managed to get the bars off like Ron and his brother's had done to the bars on his window at Privet Drive. It was raining, and the cold air infiltrated the dingy cell, causing him to shiver as it raided his bones.

Hadrian sat up on the uncomfortable bed, rubbing his arms. Gone were his dress robes, and instead he wore a dark cloth tunic and trousers. No socks or shoes. No wand.

"Fuck," he hissed. He slammed his fist down on the bed beside him.

Lowering his feet to the ground, he gave an embarrassing yelp as they connected to the freezing cold floor. It took numerous tries for him to place his feet on the ground, then he teetered over to the window. His jaw fell at the rain and clouds that had gathered outside...and the mountainous surroundings. The jagged precipices were swaddled in swathes of clouds, a clash of stark grey and white.

He was very far away from home.

He padded over to the walls, feeling his way across to see if there were any gaps or openings until he got to the metal door. Hadrian slammed his hand on it, making it rattle against the stone. The sound made his head pound once more.

Tell me...who… Hadrian shuddered as a horribly persuasive voice echoed along with the thumping of his heartbeat, inside his head. What was that?

“Hello? Let me out!” he called.

Silence.

“Let. Me. Out!” Hadrian thundered his fists onto the door for what felt like hours. His throat was raw, feet blocks of ice and eyes sore from crying. The pounding his head was subsiding a bit, but his hunger and thirst was gnawing away at his stomach. How long had he been unconscious?

It was clear that no one was coming.

Hadrian gathered himself up on the bed, huddling in the corner and bringing the thin, scratchy blanket up to cover himself.

What had he done? Arrogance had led him here. He knew that Grindelwald would make an appearance sooner rather than later, and that the Ball would be the most obvious place. However, his dueling techniques were child’s play compared to the strength of the fabled Elder Wand. And Grindelwald had excellent mastery over its power. The way the man had effortlessly batted away Hadrian’s attacks time and time again, and the strength of the dark wizard’s magic as it cracked open his shields… Hadrian closed his eyes and rested his head back on the wall.

Tom had tried to protect him. The thought should have warmed his insides, but instead left him cold. It could have ended there. He could have used that power to fight more, to escape...but instead his first reaction was to save Tom. With the Killing Curse as well...an Unforgivable that came too easily to him, especially given that it was a Ministry function. If the Ministry had punished him for protecting himself and Dudley from a dementor, then what would be his punishment for this? Perhaps that would be exempt given the attack...but Hadrian did not have much faith. He could only hope that Tom was all right, that he had survived.

The sky darkened outside as it turned to night and the rain thundered

down stronger than ever. Hadrian had tried to summon some wandless magic, but it was rusty and he was still exhausted from the fight. The only thing he had managed to do was to raise his floppy, damp pillow a millimeter off the bed.

With a screech of metal, something thunked against the door to his cell. Hadrian dropped the blanket and sat up straight as the door then opened.

It was the woman who had worn the yellow dress. Though now, she wore all black, almost like a military uniform and her hair was pulled back into a loose bun. Her pale lips curved into a smile.

“Come along, Mr Peverell, my Lord is waiting,” she said, though her wand slid out into her hand as she spoke.

His upper lip curled but he was silent. There was no point expending any energy here. It was Grindelwald he wanted to deal with. Hadrian wrapped his arms around his torso, barely able to hold back his wince as his feet landed on the glacial stone floor. The woman walked out into the corridor, and he followed.

No wonder he had no reply from anyone. Instead of emerging into a corridor of cells, he came out immediately to a spiral staircase. Hadrian descended, hearing the steps from the woman behind him padding on the steps behind him. Every now and then, he would glance back and see her wand pointing right at him but out of reach.

“Left.”

Hadrian clenched his teeth as he got to the bottom and turned left into a corridor. It was then, he stalled. The windows revealed more snowy mountains, rain lashing from thick clouds. This wasn’t Scotland...or England...this was somewhere very different. How would anyone find him?

“Move.”

He shot her an irritated look before he started to walk again, glad for the strip of grey carpet that ran in the middle of the corridor. There was a door open ahead, in which the woman told him to go through.

This room was opulent. It was vast, dominated by a large dining table in the centre made of solid wood. A variety of food and drink were laid out in a luxurious spread at one end of the table and Hadrian’s stomach gave a painful rumble at the mouth-watering sight. To the

side of it, a huge fireplace burned brightly and warmed the space up, flocked by two large tapestries emblazoned with the Deathly Hallows symbol.

“Hadrian, how nice of you to join me,” said a familiar, European voice. Grindelwald walked in from an adjoining door. This time, the man wore his own face. His hair was blonde-streaked with white, pushed back away from his pale face. He was still handsome, even though he was very much into his middle-age. Faint wrinkles streaked across his forehead and the sides of his mouth.

“Where am I?” he asked, not taking his eyes away from the dark wizard as Grindelwald took a chair at the head of the table, where the food had been placed.

“In my castle.”

Nurmengard. That was what he knew about Grindelwald in the future. Something Binns had said. He was still alive in Hadrian’s time. Locked away there.

“Ophelia, go, leave us. Hadrian, sit down.” The man gestured to the only other chair, which was to his right.

“No.” He crossed his arms over his chest, noting that the woman had left and the door pulled shut with a ‘click’.

“I must insist.”

“You can insist all you want,” Hadrian retorted.

Grindelwald took the Elder Wand out and pointed it at Hadrian. “You really do not want to eat after the Cruciatus. It really upsets the stomach.”

He scowled at the older man before he marched over, dragging the chair out and pulling it away from Grindelwald, who looked amused all the while. When it was mid-way down the table, but on the edge of where the food was, he sat down.

“Foolish.” Grindelwald flicked his wand and Hadrian’s chair shot sideways, the table legs squealing across the stone floor.

Hadrian held onto the arms of the chair and his scowl deepened as he now sat just a metre away from the Dark Lord. His chair was now stuck to the floor and unable to move. However, his attention was

grasped by the scents from the spread before them. Being this close to the food made his mouth salivate. When had he last eaten? Just before the Ministry Function. But when was that? How long had passed?

“Help yourself. We shall talk around dining,” Grindelwald said, lifting some meat onto his plate.

His eyes roamed over the food, drinking up the various smells and sights. He dished up various vegetables and meats onto his plate, eyeing up the wine that was being poured into the glass beside him. Hadrian studied Grindelwald’s strong hands, not allowing his gaze to wander and his drink to be spiked.

“You are right to be cautious.”

Hadrian made an affirmative noise, watching as the other man drew away to rest back in his chair. Grindelwald lifted his glass of red wine and sipped it, eyeing Hadrian who was now eating his meal as delicately as possible. What he wanted to do was stuff his mouth so bad, it would make Ron proud. But it really wasn’t the time.

“Not going to ask me where my castle is, or where you are?”

He swallowed his mouthful of food, glad that his headache had dissipated further. “Where is your castle? Where am I?” he asked, unable to keep the droll tone from his voice.

Grindelwald’s smile grew. “Oh, I do like you.” He placed down his wine. “You either do not care…or already know. I will go with the latter, especially from the fierce battle you gave me. You care very much that you are here. So…how do you know where my illustrious castle is?”

“I have no idea where it is,” Hadrian lied. “I just saw some mountains through my tiny cell window and presumed it was far enough away that I wouldn’t even know.”

The Dark Lord hummed, not convinced. “You will tell me at some point; I can wait.”

Hadrian glowered, watching the man eat some of his vegetables. He finally gave in and sipped his wine, given it was the only refreshment on the table and he was parched. Grimacing at the rich and heady taste, he put it down and tried to eat some meat to take away the acidicness that was wrapped around his tongue.

“What do you want from me?”

Grindelwald patted his mouth with a napkin. “Initially, I was just going to torture you until you told me who you actually are, then kill you. You are not a Peverell, they are all dead. I know you are using their name to hide yours, but I do wonder why. My interest was already piqued when one of my dear *friends* at the Ministry let it slip that you met with Professor Croaker before his untimely death. However, the ‘icing on the cake’ as you British would say, was that *power* you demonstrated.”

Hadrian was silent, his fork now chasing a pea around his plate, avoiding the man’s eyes.

“An effortless use of the Killing Curse…and Blood Magic. It was truly a delicious sight.” Grindelwald smiled, running a hand over his blonde-grey hair. “And that power just comes so naturally to you. You remind me of a boy I used to know.”

Dumbledore. Hadrian sipped his wine, not able to stop the small grimace crossing his lips. “Who was that?”

“I used to know one of your Professors, but he fell away from our cause over time. Such a shame. Such potential.” Grindelwald continued to eat.

Submerging in his thoughts, Hadrian tried to make sense of the myriad of questions he had. His experience of Dark Lords was the opposite of the charm that this man was emitting and it was forcing him to re-evaluate everything. Tom Riddle charmed (as he had seen in his experience at Hogwarts, but also through Dumbledore’s ‘memories’ that he had shared with Harry), but not when he lost his sanity over dividing his soul.

“Do you plan to still torture and kill me?”

“I have not quite decided yet…but I do think it would be such a shame to lose that fiery mind of yours.”

He swirled the wine in the glass, the dark red reminding him of the tinge in Tom’s eyes.

“I can give you such power at my side, little snake. No judgement. No holding back. No hiding from the true potential of your magic. I will let you flourish, become everything you should and could be.”

Hadrian swallowed, eyes flickering up. He already had his plate full with a different Dark wizard/Lord and he had not banked on lobbying with another. It had been simple...kill Grindelwald. But now he was trapped here with no wand, and outnumbered. This could not be a Gryffindor move but utterly Slytherin. He had to defeat Grindelwald. He had to get back to Tom and prevent the horrorshow of a future ahead.

“What do you want in return?”

Grindelwald smiled, but this time it was more teeth than humour. “Your name. Your allegiance. I want to be your mentor.”

Hadrian’s back stiffened. “I cannot condone the killing of Muggles.”

A laugh poured from the dark wizard’s mouth. “It is not about killing, dear Hadrian. I just do not think that Muggles deserve the power that they bestow upon themselves. Have you seen how they abuse what power they have now?”

“What suggests we are any better? You are classed as a terrorist in the Ministry of Magic’s eyes,” he replied. “You seem to spill blood just as easily.”

Grindelwald nodded. “I know how I am painted in your country and across the world, but it is provoked by people’s fear. It is true that the Ministries across the world dislike my ideology, but that is because of the fear they have of the unknown and they treat Muggles like equals. Tell me, Hadrian, how many wizarding wars have there been? How many places have we obliterated with weapons to kill enmasse? Have you *seen* what they are doing out there?”

The man stood up and strode over to the back of Hadrian’s chair. He waved his hand in the air, just in front of the younger male’s face. Mist poured from his pores, until a ghostly scene played out of a mushroom cloud blossoming over a city.

“I have Seen it. Muggles will lay destruction upon the world.”

“Are you a Seer? Have you made a prophecy?”

“Yes. I have Seen it with my visions.”

Hadrian shook his head, waving away the scene. No, he knew the future. There would be two Muggle wars, many would die but it would not lay ‘destruction upon the world’. Tom and Grindelwald had

opposing ideas...one wanted the obedience of the Muggles, the other the absolute closing of communities. And Hadrian knew which he would prefer.

“Are you a Muggle sympathiser, little snake?” said the charming voice behind him, a hand drifting down Hadrian’s cheek.

He pulled away from the touch. “I am still making my mind up on what and how I feel about the wizarding and Muggle world,” he replied honestly. “And I cannot give you my name.”

Grindelwald was silent before he strode away, taking his wine glass as he swept over to the fireplace. His hip leant on the side, gazing into the fire. “Then you have two options. Your first...you give me your name. Your real name, and nothing more. If you do not, I will take your name from you in any way possible and the consequences will be great.”

Hadrian stood, crossing his arms over his chest. “It’s just a name. It means nothing,” he hissed.

“If it means nothing, give it to me.”

“No.” This time, his answer was more hesitant.

“This is your final chance.”

Hadrian swallowed. “No.”

Grindelwald sighed, shaking his head. “I did not misjudge your stubbornness.” He gestured to a table the other side of the fireplace, a small wooden one that held a wedge of paper. “Please.”

Hadrian frowned and walked over, not liking the proximity to the man. However, he reached down and took the newspaper in his hands. Emerald eyes widened as he took in the front cover of *The Daily Prophet*.

Potters Dead!

It was emblazoned in the centre of the edition in thick, bold writing. Hadrian’s mouth opened before his mind started to catch up with him.

“This cannot be real,” he whispered.

Hadrian checked the date of the paper. It was dated two days after the Ministry Function. The writing swam as his eyes stung with tears.

“I assure you, that it is real, Harry Potter.”

His stomach dropped, dinner rising into the base of his throat. The paper dropped from his trembling hands, falling to the floor with a ‘thump’. “No, no…this is not real. This cannot be real.” He seized his head in his hands.

“It has been four days since I brought you here. The first day, we woke you only enough for me to enter your mind.” Grindelwald chuckled. “I must admit, I am very impressed by your Occlumency shields. It took multiple attempts, and I did not want to pry too much. We have to keep that smart little mind of yours.”

The man’s words were drifting away as Hadrian’s mind raced. It was the hand on his shoulder that brought him crashing back to reality. His eyes met ice blue as he raised his head.

“Harry Potter, the boy out of his own time.”

“What do you do?” he uttered, his knees wobbling.

Grindelwald had placed down his wine at some point on the fireplace and his other hand took Hadrian’s other shoulder, supporting him. “You belong here, little snake. I know nothing of your future, or how you ended up here, but I have cut your ties. You are free. *I* have freed you.”

His father would never exist. Ron, Hermione, the Weasleys…all gone. They would never know Harry Potter. He would never be the Boy-Who-Lived.

“I am still here,” he croaked. “I am still alive.”

“Yes.” Grindelwald offered him what looked like a reassuring smile. “The theories all point to your permanent existence in our time. Croaker had completed extensive work for us when we were looking at time magic for our cause.”

Hadrian blinked as anger rose within him, breaking free of the paralysing shock. However, instead of giving in to the wild emotion, like he usually did, Hadrian pushed it down forcefully. He had to

survive this. He had to save Tom from himself.

His fingers drifted to his face and his breath caught as they connected to the lightning bolt scar that linked him to Tom Riddle/Voldemort, somehow. Relief uncoiled in his gut, aiding the abatement of his fury.

“What do you want from me?”

“I want you to kill Albus Dumblefore for me.”

Hadrian stared at him before releasing a short laugh, pulling away from the older man. “That is ridiculous.”

“You are not ready yet, but we will train you. I believe that you are the one I am looking for.”

He quirked an eyebrow up at the dark wizard. “Why don’t you do it? He’s your old friend.”

“We have an unbreakable agreement.” Grindelwald retrieved his wine from the top of the fireplace and sipped it. “It is only a matter of time before he finds some way around it…someone else to do what he cannot. He now stands as my enemy.”

There was no way he was going to kill Dumbledore. But all of this…all of this meant that he needed to rethink his entire strategy. Not that he had much of one to begin with. Grindelwald was more powerful and manipulative than he expected. It was not like Voldemort, where there was a connection between them. This present Dark Lord was different, but very much the same. Arrogant and charming. If he could work with Riddle, he could work with Grindelwald.

“I shall give you time to think.” Grindelwald strode over to the table, placing down his now empty wine glass.

“If I do not accept?”

“Then I will put another pawn on the table, little snake.”

Hadrian froze at the words and at the sharp smile sent his way. He barely registered the woman coming back in, to lead him back to the cell. Both of them were quiet, and it was only when the door closed, that Hadrian allowed himself to *feel* again.

A broken cry escaped him. He clasped a shaking hand to his mouth and sunk down onto the hard mattress that was now his bed. His

grandparents, dead. James Potter would be no more. There would be one member missing from the Mauraders...if they ever came to be. Harry Potter would never exist. He now existed only in this fucked up timeline.

Grindelwald had forced himself into Hadrian's mind. His hands itched at his skull at the violation. How could he keep all of his other secrets safe? His shields were strong, to cast the dark wizard out, even in a state of unconsciousness. And the dark wizard had wanted to keep Hadrian's sanity, stopping him from causing any damage.

Gathering the limp pillow in his arms, Hadrian hugged it to his body as his back rested against the cool stone. His mind drifted to Tom, and he prayed that he would forgive Hadrian.

Chapter 31

Chapter Notes

I must admit, I did love writing this chapter and did it very quickly! This is a big one, so get ready for it.

How did I get to over 100,000 words on this? I apologise for the incredibly slow-burn, and I assure you I will make up for it later!

Thank you to all the lovely comments; they do make my day.

Warnings: gore, violence

I hope you all enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Sleep had not come easy to him, broken by the bursts of glacial air through the metal bars of the cell window. It was uncomfortable in the bed. The more Hadrian laid down, the harder the mattress seemed to become beneath him and the sheet he had been given had no protection against the weather. He yearned for the comfort of the bed in his dorm with the Slytherins. He missed the quiet snores of Lestrange and the faint sound of water from the submerged quarters in the Great Lake. He missed Tom.

Tom would be furious with him. He should have prepared more for a fight against Grindelwald, or alerted someone sooner. Things may have been different. Hadrian had spent a large amount of his night remembering Tom's mouth and body against his until his thoughts would tumble into darkness about the massacre of his relatives.

When the morning light started to trickle over the mountains, Hadrian's eyes were red and sore. There was a shiver in his bones he could not get rid of. His magic was returning, but his body was still in shock over the events and he was more wary. Grindelwald's other 'pawn' was obvious. Tom. Tom had spoken about their 'joint' magic at the Ministry Function and if Grindelwald was truthful, he had eyes in Hogwarts as well. It was obvious there had been something between Riddle and him. They had a very public relationship with their use of magic and their joint language in Parseltongue. He hoped that Tom was taking care of Onyx.

There was a sudden shriek of metal that symbolised the opening of the

cell door.

Hadrian did not turn to face whoever came in, because he knew instantly. With his magic returning, he could *feel* Grindelwald. It was the slight oiliness to his magic or the *thickness* that seemed to gather, which caused Hadrian to tense. The man's magic felt wrong. However, it was still a surprise that the dark wizard had made the journey up to Hadrian's cell.

The bed dipped slightly beside him. "How did you sleep, little snake?"

He sighed. "Do you have to ask?"

"I was hoping you would have breakfast with me."

Hadrian closed his eyes, resting his head on the stone wall. "Do I have a choice?"

There was a huff of laughter. "Yes, regardless, you and I will be going out for a walk after."

That turned his head. He took in the appearance of the dark wizard. Grindelwald wore smart, form-fitting robes and there was a light smile tugging the side of his mouth. Those blue eyes twinkled, much like Dumbledore's, and that was a sight enough to squeeze his stomach.

"I would like breakfast."

The smile grew. A hand clasped down on Hadrian's knee. "I hoped that would be the answer."

Hadrian moved away from the touch. He stood up from the bed, biting his lip as his bare feet touched the freezing stone. There was a waft of magic, and his feet were encased in a pair of woolen slippers. He sighed at the warm sensation against his cold skin. However, there was no way he was going to thank the man.

Grindelwald stood, gesturing for him to descend ahead of him. Hadrian pulled a face but his hunger made him obey. Besides, he had to go about this in a different way. He walked down the staircase until they reached the corridor below. Both of them walked side-by-side in silence, until they reached the dining room from yesterday.

Instead of dragging his chair, Hadrian took the seat on Grindelwald's left side.

“Tea?”

Hadrian raised his eyebrows. “Uh, I don’t drink tea.” Instead, he pulled the small pitcher of what looked like pumpkin juice towards his glass. He poured himself a glass and then helped himself to come toast.

Everything tasted so good. Hadrian savoured the burst of butter on his tongue and the slight tang of the pumpkin juice at the back of his throat as he swallowed it down. Grindelwald was reading one of the several newspapers that were gathered between them. It was all very quaint. Here he was, breakfasting with this timeline’s Dark Lord.

“Can I read this?”

Grindelwald seemed surprised by his request, eyes dropping to see Hadrian’s fingers skimming the top of *The Daily Prophet* . It was the only English newspaper. He nodded. “Go ahead.”

Hadrian finished his slice of toast before eagerly absorbing the news from the United Kingdom. Home. There were lots of stories on the front page about the Ministry Function - the fallout of some Ministry workers revealing their alliances to Grindelwald. It was a surprise. How was Grindelwald expecting the other evening to go? He had taken Hadrian as a risk of losing some of his followers’ influence at the Ministry.

It was the marker to go to ‘Page 2’ that caught his attention. There was a picture of Dippet behind his desk looking thoughtful, an owl moving behind him. The article was about the kidnapping of one of Hogwarts students - Hadrian Peverell.

Is Hogwarts harbouring dark wizards?

By Gideon Warbeck

As has been widely circulated, a student attending the Ministry’s latest ‘Bash’, celebrating their successes so far in the navigation of current wars across Europe, was taken. The student - Hadrian Peverell - joined Hogwarts as an orphan in October of last year and was Sorted into the notorious Slytherin house. Slytherin had a broad reputation of churning out all kinds of Dark Wizards, following in the footsteps of Salazar Slytherin

himself. Furthermore, sources from the school have confirmed that Hadrian Peverell has the ability to speak to snakes, a dark ability that links him more to the Muggle-hating Founder.

Not much is known about Hadrian Peverell's life before Hogwarts, apart from sources confirming that Grindelwald allegedly killed his mother whilst running from the Dark Wizard across Europe. However, as many know, the Peverell line died out many years ago, and no living relatives have ever been confirmed. So, who is the boy who claims to be part of the ancient and noble line?

Headmaster Armando Dippet has kept unusually silent about the 'kidnapped' student, rejecting all requests for interviews and instead informing The Daily Prophet that he is working closely with the Ministry to bring back the boy. Sources claim that Hadrian Peverell and another student had recently saved Hogwarts Great Hall from a fire that broke out on stage during a school performance.

It is the use of powerful magic that has led to questions surrounding Hadrian Peverell's true allegiances. A Ministry Official who did not want to be named, commented that she saw first-hand the seventeen-year-old cast the Killing Curse effortlessly, narrowly missing his classmate who was also attending. Although many testified that Hadrian Peverell was using the curse in self-defense, the Killing Curse has been outlawed since 1717 and the punishment of casting such a spell, is death. The use of such forbidden and dark magic has placed questions over Hadrian Peverell and his acceptance into Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry.

It appears he was the target of Grindelwald's attack on the Ministry, but for what reason? Until Headmaster Dippet comes clean about how and why Hadrian Peverell ended up at Hogwarts, we can only speculate on what makes the boy worthwhile of a Dark Lord's attention.

Hadrian folded the paper and pushed it away from him. He hadn't even thought before using the Unforgivable. All that was on his mind was protecting Tom, and the woman could have cast anything on him.

By doing so, he had doomed himself. Things never changed with *The Daily Prophet* . It did make a change from being the 'Golden Boy'. Now, he was being set up to be Public Enemy Number Two.

"How does it feel reading about yourself in the paper?" Grindelwald asked, not lifting his eyes from his newspaper as he sipped his tea.

Hadrian frowned. "Shit. How else is it supposed to feel?"

"Manners, little snake." Blue eyes rose. "Besides, they will all come around to our way of thinking soon."

"*Our* way?" He snorted lightly. "Your way. Anyway, you can't expect everyone to just 'come round' when you are talking about placing wizards in a superior position over Muggles."

Grindelwald just gave him another hint of a smile. "You would be surprised at how many are scared by the Muggle's hideous war." He placed his paper down. "Did the article include your use of such a dark curse? You must tell me more about that. I was very shocked and impressed, not to mention your use of blood magic."

Hadrian shifted in his chair, feeling the warmth of the fire behind him. He stayed quiet.

It did not put Grindelwald off. "You were protecting your friend? Not many would use the Killing Curse to protect just a friend...a lover perhaps?" His smile grew as Hadrian glared at him. "Do not worry, the boy is of little interest to me. It is your strength that is truly a marvel."

He inwardly felt a flicker of amusement at the naivety to the man's declaration that Tom Riddle was of 'little interest'.

"When did you first cast an Unforgivable?"

Hadrian steeled himself. "A woman killed my Godfather, so I tried to *Crucio* her. That was last year."

"It did not work?"

"No. I didn't have it in me. I didn't mean it." He could hear Bellatrix Lestrange's cackle in his head and her mocking words as she danced through the Ministry, away from him.

"You have quite a handle over dark magic, despite that, in such a

short time," Grindelwald mused. "Are you finished?"

Hadrian blinked. "Uh, yes."

The dark wizard got to his feet and strode over to the other door that he had appeared at yesterday. "Follow me."

He removed himself from the breakfast table, walking after Grindelwald to enter a huge spread of a decadent living area. It was richly decorated with deep crimson-coloured sofas surrounding another large fireplace. There were a number of bookshelves embedded into the walls where tapestries and paintings hung. How had Grindelwald gotten his hands on Numengard?

The man retrieved a folded pile of clothes from a side table, striding back over to Hadrian. "There is a washroom through that door." He pointed. "I want you to clean up and get dressed." The wizard then delved into his pocket and retrieved a silver bangle. He gave Hadrian the clothing and then took the younger male's wrist.

"What is that?" Hadrian hissed, trying to pull away.

However, the man's grip tightened and he slipped the bangle onto Hadrian's arm. It tightened and there was a sharp pinch as Grindelwald cast a non-verbal spell onto the metal. "That, my little snake, is just something to keep you in place until you earn my trust." Grindelwald withdrew, watching as Hadrian unsuccessfully tried to pull it off. "It is called a *restringo* band. They used to be used for children who struggled with accidental magic. Could not have a baby disappearing to a different place."

"A child's bracelet?" Hadrian seethed.

"Yes." Grindelwald appeared happy with himself. "I found it in my personal vault, so see it as a wonderful gift." He chuckled at the horror on the younger male's face before pulling back his sleeve and revealing an identical silver band but it was thicker and had a strip of gold running through the middle. "I can control how much magic I limit you to. Mostly, I propose to use it to stop you from apparating away."

Hadrian glared down at the silver that snugly rested on his skin. There were so many things he wanted to say. He wanted to throw the clothes at Grindelwald's face, spit on him and then *Avada Kedavra* him into the fireplace just so he could watch his corpse burn. It was then that Hadrian vowed that he would not just disarm Grindelwald for the

Elder Wand. He was going to kill him. And it would hurt.

With just a disgusted noise, Hadrian turned on his heel and stormed over to the bathroom. It was twenty minutes later that he emerged. The robes were the most expensive he had ever touched, let alone owned. They were almost exactly like Grindelwald's, form-fitting and military in style, with silver clasps down the right breast. However, these were black, with forest green detailing and trousers. It had felt nice to stand in the showering system, despite how old it was in comparison to the ones in the future, and feel cleaner. His attempts at magic came to nothing with the introduction of the stupid bangle.

Grindelwald was sat on the sofa by the fire, twirling the Elder Wand through his fingers. When he saw Hadrian, he got to his feet and pocketed the wand. Hadrian moved self-consciously as eyes roamed over him. The robes were tight compared to his school robes, and the clothes he had been given when he arrived in the past. In the future, all he wore were Dudley's hand-me-downs. A life in baggy clothing.

"Much better."

Hadrian blinked as he was also handed a winter cloak laden with enchantments that he could feel - all protection. "Where are we going?"

"I am going to take you for a walk, which will hopefully...aid you in your decision," Grindelwald answered, his Hungarian accent curling around each vowel. "The weather will be unpredictable." With that, he offered his arm.

Curiosity seized Hadrian. It was new for a Dark Lord to be chasing him to *join* him, rather than hunting him down. What could the man possibly show to him to change his mind about everything the dark wizard was offering. Nothing would change his mind about killing Dumbledore.

Hadrian pulled the cloak on, attaching the buckle at the base of his throat, gathering the hood at the back of his neck. He placed a hand on Grindelwald's arm.

The pull of apparition tugged at his gut and it took all of his willpower not to throw up when their surroundings stabilised. Side-along apparition was always the worst kind of travel, made even worse by the feel of the dark wizard's magic against his.

It was the smell that hit him first. Hadrian wrinkled his nose. It was

hard to describe - a mixture of smoke, sweat and something rotten. He let go of Grindelwald and stared at their immediate surroundings, only a little aware that the man cast a disillusionment spell on them.

“Merlin,” he breathed.

The gunfire was a constant rattle, bursts of hot, white light accompanying the sound. It was everywhere, flanking them on all sides. Huge, grey clouds were gathered ahead, thick rain pelting from the sky. The droplets hit his head, but all Hadrian could do was blink. His boots sunk into slodgy mud.

“Come,” Grindewald said, his face completely devoid of emotion.

“Won’t it hit us?” Hadrian asked, eyeing the gunfire.

“No, little snake. I have protected us from the Muggle weapons. Magical shields work in the same way.” He began to walk.

As both of them crossed the muddy wasteland, Hadrian found his eyes moving to view everything. In the distance, there was a whistling sound from the sky before dirt exploded and cries rose up in some horrifying crescendo. There were swathes of barbed wire, broken wood and bodies...so many bodies. Some were caught in the wire, some were just rotting in the mud like discarded pigs. Hadrian found himself pausing at one body that was slumped backwards over a piece of metal. The soldier’s helmet had come off, exposing a once-youthful face that was deathly pale...eyes blank and unseeing. His death was obvious - the huge eruption of his stomach open and exposed for the flies to feast on.

Voldemort’s extensive use of *Crucio* seemed like a walk in the park to this.

Hadrian turned away from the body, trying to gulp down fresh air but the only air he drank down was fetid and cloying. He gagged, bringing his hands to his knees.

“There is still much to see.”

He glared at Grindelwald. “I think I have seen enough.”

The other man made a thoughtful noise. “I think not.”

Hadrian gathered his bearings and followed. He walked around more fallen bodies, rubble and broken parts of machinery and bombs. There

was no closing his eyes to escape the horrors that faced him, less he fell into a ditch or onto a bloated body. The smell was awful, causing him to gather his cloak and hold it against his face.

They saw more of the same until a whistling sound caught his attention. A trench. Hadrian froze on the spot. Something like a greenish-tinted mist was billowing up from the unnatural crack in the earth where the men huddled away from the artillery and gunfire. Grindelwald was beside him.

“A gas attack.” A hand brushed over Hadrian’s front. “Which is why we go no further than this. Our magical protections will handle a few bullets from their weaponry, but I would not be able to save you from their weapons of mass destruction.”

Hadrian’s mouth opened as he saw men squirming to get over the top, over into No Man’s Land. Their hands fumbled for their gas masks. Someone was shouting - screaming. Gurgling.

“Those who cannot attach their mask, will most likely die,” the dark wizard noted beside him. “Their lungs fill with liquid.”

Hadrian just watched in horror - a useless voyeur - as a moustached man clawed at his throat, eye bulging out of his sockets. “I have seen enough,” he rasped, voice catching in the back of his throat. When there was no response, he squeezed his eyes and looked away. “Please...I have seen enough.”

He was barely aware of a hand taking his arm before his stomach squeezed with the disapparition. When they were back in the wizard’s living quarters, Hadrian tugged away from the hand and ran into the bathroom where he promptly threw up in the toilet. He rested his head against the porcelain, welcoming the coolness against his sweaty forehead. His hands tore at his boots, which were covered in mud and whatever else, throwing them into the corner of the bathroom.

Ten minutes later, he emerged to find Grindelwald waiting for him, a cup of water outstretched towards Hadrian.

He nodded a thanks, taking a comfortable sofa opposite from where the man sat. There was a small, dark wooden table between them with some kind of yellow flower in a vase. Hadrian sipped the cold water, welcoming it down to chase away the tang of vomit on his tongue and down his throat.

“Tell me what you saw.”

Hadrian blinked, holding the glass between his hands. “I did not realise it was like that. The way they talk of the wars in the future…” he trailed off, seeing in his mind’s eye all the heroic war films and documentaries that his Uncle used to watch on a Sunday morning.

“The Muggles talk that way even now, Hadrian. Their newspapers talk about their heroes in the trenches, on how they are fighting a glorious fight for the freedom of their countries. What do you know of the wars?”

His tongue wetted his lips. “I know what Hitler is doing. I know about the gas chambers. I just-”

“Sometimes, it is easier for us to distance ourselves from such events.”

Hadrian nodded. “But this war…”

“It will not be the last, will it?”

Emerald eyes rose. “No. Not like this...this is the last world war.”

“In your timeline so far.” Grindelwald tapped a hand on his leg. “The last time we exposed ourselves to the Muggles, they hunted our kind. Wizards wanted to live amongst them, breed with them. Their technology grows stronger. If they decided to drop one of their ‘bombs’ onto a wizard settlement, that would be it. A whole village or town, destroyed.”

“This does not happen,” Hadrian denied.

Grindelwald gave an empty smile. “The vision of the future I Saw...twenty years ago now...showed to me a world unlike this. It was a point in the future I could not name. But I saw it. I saw the End.”

Something heavy twisted in Hadrian’s gut as he allowed the man’s words to sink in. He wanted to protest, but how could he? It did not matter if Grindelwald was telling the truth or not about being a Seer. A nuclear weapon - they were constantly being talked about on the news his Aunt and Uncle watched. Vernon would always interject with a, “Bollocks to getting rid of our Nukes! If they have them, we better!”

It was a ‘what if’. Hadrian saw how his Aunt and Uncle treated people who ‘weren’t like them’.

“I cannot kill Dumbledore for you.”

Grindelwald was silent for a long moment. “Dumbledore will be opposed to our ideology.”

Hadrian grimaced. “I know who Dumbledore is. I know what he puts his values in.”

“So, it is me who perishes in your future.” The dark wizard just raised his eyebrows at Hadrian’s disappointed expression. “Only one of us can survive this.”

“He will never kill you,” Hadrian replied. “You mean too much to him.”

“Ah yes.” Grindelwald’s mouth curved into a smile. “Albus’ big secret from the world. Tell me, does he still value ‘love’ beyond anything else?” At Hadrian’s silence, he laughed. “No, he cannot or will not kill me…but I would be a willing martyr for the cause. I will not make you promise to kill Dumbledore for me, because I know that one day, you will have to kill him to protect yourself.”

Dark eyebrows flew up, a scoffing laugh flying from the younger male’s lips.

“Oh, you doubt it?” That smile deepened, a wicked quality to the sides that instantly dissolved any humour in Hadrian. “You think he will sit idly by and watch you perform such rich, dark magic? Blood magic requires vast power, and so effortlessly you wielded it. Do you think Albus would sit by? He knows the power of blood magic first hand. Across the world, our magical heritage has been eroded away.”

“Like ritual magic.”

Grindelwald chuckled. “Exactly, little snake.”

“But I don’t understand why blood and ritual magic have been deemed as ‘dark’. The ritual magic I have done has been…pure, wholesome even. I understand a bit more on blood magic, given how dangerous it is.” He paused. “To- My friend,” he corrected, “told me that ritual magic was discontinued because of Muggleborns and their culture.”

“Exactly right. It was seen as too ‘old’. I believe there was a very popular book over a hundred years ago that depicted it as a large orgy. The more we open our culture, the more we erode ours.”

“Why not just shut the Muggles away? Lock down the Wizarding World?”

Grindelwald shook his head. “You think that will stop them obliterating everything?”

Hadrian opened and then closed his mouth. He sipped his water and rested back in the chair.

“I have been waiting for a long time for someone like you.” Blue eyes twinkled. “Your future is no more, ever since you stepped foot into this timeline. I have never wanted a child, but the idea of mentoring has recently interested me. I want to watch *you* flourish, little snake. I want to be the one to show you all that you are capable of, and more. No restrictions, no laws in the way. Just your unbridled power. Let me mentor you, Hadrian.”

Chapter End Notes

A massive nod to Wilfred Owen's 'Dulce et Decorum Est' for the inspiration for the war scene.

Chapter 32

Chapter Notes

> So sorry this is very late! I will warn from here on, that updates may be more sporadic due to RL obligations! I am trying hard juggle everything at the moment.

Wiping sweat from his brow, Hadrian felt the blade slip in his sweaty grip. He took in a ragged breath that burned down into his lungs - his body battling against the iciness of the air.

“Giving up?”

He shook his head, unable to find the words as he drew the small, curved blade up once more.

The attack came harder. There was a flurry of movement as he worked hard to duck and spin out of the way of the knife that stabbed at him. Hadrian tried to employ his blade, but the hesitation was all his opponent needed.

Sharp pain bloomed in his shoulder. He gasped, hearing the echo of his weapon clatter to the stone ground.

“Not good enough,” said Vivienne, her dark eyes drinking in the curved blade that was embedded in the youth’s shoulder.

Hadrian’s vision wobbled as he glanced down at the injury - his fifth one of the week so far. He was lucky at this point only for five. The French woman had gone easy on him to begin with, teaching him various stances and movements. However, she soon learned that Hadrian was best when he learnt along the way and it had not taken too long for the sparring to begin.

“”I am trying,” he bit out.

Her lips twitched downwards. “It does not look like it.” She started to walk away, towards the thick, stone bench that stood in the courtyard.

Clenching his teeth against the pain, he moved, keeping his upper body as still as possible and he eventually lowered himself beside her. Her dark hand rose and grasped the hilt of the dagger.

Hadrian did not close his eyes. He watched her fascinated expression as she *pulled* . His vision darkened at the edges, but he fought it away, chasing after the minute details of her face as she revelled in the blood that cascaded down from the wound.

“You’re a sadist,” he said, voice coming out as a rasp. The healing magic washed over his shoulder, numbing the area as his muscles and flesh knitted itself together.

Vivienne just hummed, raising her blade and watching Hadrian’s blood drip onto the pale stone slabs.

He took his flask from next to him, uncapping it with one hand whilst he held the bottle in between his thighs. The cool water splashed against his tongue, and he could have moaned in ecstasy at the refreshing taste after the lengthy spar. As he closed it back up again, his eyes wandered over the mountains surrounding them. Here, it felt like they were at the edge of the world, enclosed in by the jagged grey bodies of the mountains, acting like sentinels between Grindelwald and his enemies.

“You have to want to kill me,” the woman said. She was cleaning her blade now, until its edge was shining and ready to bite into flesh once more.

“Magic is easy...this...this is hard. Personal.” His fingers touched the silver band on his wrist. It was warm, absorbing his body heat.

“And as a wizard, you will be able to use magic. *This* ,” she brandished her dagger, “allows you a wild card up your sleeve.”

Hadrian glowered. “I don’t need a wild card. I need my magic.”

Vivienne laughed, her brown eyes shining as the skin around her eyes wrinkled. “I thought you were into your blood magic, Hadrian.” She leant forward. The smell of cinnamon and smoke carried in the air around her. “There is nothing more powerful than the spill of fresh blood during battle, to cast the *best* rituals.”

He blinked. “Wait. Does that mean-”

“You are not ready yet.” The willowy woman stood, sliding her blade into her sheath and taking Hadrian’s as well. “But yes, our Lord wants you trained in blood magic, given your affinity to that sort of magic.”

Through his mind, flashed an image of his blade slicing through

someone's neck. The blood spurting as he turned, gathering his magic… "I have told him I will not kill for him."

Vivienne did not reply, instead, she strode over to the entrance into Numengard. He worried his bottom lip through his teeth as he stood up, wincing at the pain. His fingers rose to touch his form-fitting grey robes, which were now stained with a huge crimson mark. Not the first of the week by far.

Hadrian followed, entering the castle. There was a slight chill in the air, but it felt warmer than outside. He rubbed his hands together, trying to get his circulation going again. However, he soon stopped when it pulled on his shoulder. Vivienne led him to his new set of rooms, where the expectation was that he would clean himself up and make himself presentable for his afternoon of study.

She left him inside his rooms, before closing the door behind her, locking him in. As much as Grindelwald had the illusion of 'freedom' with their agreement, it was just an illusion. Every movement of his was tracked either by his new set of mentors, or the guards. Trust would have to be earned. Hadrian shed his robes, moving into the bathroom to wash up.

Vivid green eyes stared back at him in the mirror after he splashed warm water onto his face. He missed his magic. It had been over a week of physical training - building muscle memory, learning new weaponry and basic fitness. Part of him really enjoyed it, as it reminded him of Quidditch. His body ached constantly but there was a sense of gratification from the process. A week ago, he had been locked away in a small cell, and now he had been given a guest section of rooms next to Grindelwald's.

What if he had said 'no' to being mentored by the Dark Lord? He would have died. That was a fact, especially as Grindelwald had told him over dinner the night after. The man could not afford someone like Hadrian as his enemy. Why had Hadrian agreed?

He stepped under the spray of the shower, barely biting back a moan as the water thundered onto his aching limbs. Positioning his shoulder away from the water, he looked down at the wound. The flesh was stitching itself together right in front of his eyes. He barely resisted prodding it. It would join his other new white scars. One was on his stomach where Vivienne had slashed him across his abdomen and the other was on his wrist where he had fallen during a dangerous area of the fitness test, his bone breaking free of the skin.

Fifteen minutes later, Hadrian had been led to Grindelwald's study by guards. That was where he was now. His finger flicked through the pages of the thick book that had been waiting for him. It was something he had been reading through for three days now, and he was surprisingly half way through. He had eaten his way through the volume, due to his growing interest in vampires and that his next part was all about blood rituals and its links to vampiric history.

Sanguini had been the first (and last) vampire that he had ever met. The coin he had given Hadrian was still locked away with his Invisibility Cloak, but not with his trunk. He would not be that stupid, especially when he was dealing with potentially meeting Grindelwald. No, his belongings had been stored in the Chamber. He had been confident that he would win, but a backup was always necessary, to protect one of the Hallows.

"...want to speak to you about building in the next steps to control the Muggles…" One of the voices from the six of Grindelwald's followers caught Hadrian's attention.

His gaze rose from his book and he watched Grindelwald lean over the massive roll of parchment that spelled a lot of their plans. They all surrounded it. The Dark Lord had his hands spread out on the side of the large, circular table. His eyes were moving across the map. It was hard to imagine Voldemort having such promising discussions with his followers, representing just how insane the horcruxes had made the man. If only there was some way to communicate with Tom, to check he was still keeping the promise not to make anymore. At night he had tried to force himself into dreams with Tom. Nothing ever happened.

Hadrian went back to reading the book, jotting down information that he wanted to keep track of.

He startled when a hand came down on his shoulder, gripping him tightly. "How are you finding the read, little snake?" came the Hungarian purr behind him.

"Interesting," he replied, trying to ignore the twinge in his shoulder.

"Ah, vampires."

Hadrian noted that the man's followers still stood there, a bit more awkwardly as they half-watched the interaction between the two of them. "What is your stance on vampires? Where do they fit in with your grand plans?"

The hand squeezed harder at the edge of sarcasm. A slight warning. Hadrian had to clench his jaw to stop a whimper of pain from releasing. “They hold limited powers, but keep to themselves.”

“So, you do not plan to bring them in?”

Grindelwald chuckled. “They are beasts. Dark creatures - parasitic if we allowed them into our culture.” He paused. “Will you be asking about werewolves next? I doubt the Wizarding community would sleep very well if we let all of those roam free in the streets.”

Hadrian frowned. “Some werewolves are good people.”

He laughed this time, a full-bellied laugh that travelled over to the people around the table and set them off, laughing along with their dear leader. Oh, how Hadrian wanted to see their heads roll off their bodies and slap wetly onto the floor. He could imagine doing it himself, the curved blade he used during training slicing cleanly through.

“Keep reading, Hadrian.” The hand slapped onto his back before Grindelwald strode back over to the plans.

He wanted to retaliate, to fight back against the man who laughed at him but he couldn’t. Instead, Hadrian found his eyes travelling back to the book to continue his reading about the limited recording of vampires and their use of blood magic. His fingers drifted constantly to the band on his wrist, feeling the smooth silver. Blood magic would not work without his magic, which Grindelwald kept from him still. He had tried in his rooms, but ended up leaving a mess he had to clean up whilst feeling light-headed.

A slight tingling sensation drifted across his scar. Hadrian froze, back straightening. His fingers fluttered up to it, but it was gone. Tom? His throat clenched with the sudden emotion that hit him. He had never had the chance to speak to the other male about where their relationship was. Their business was done. Tom had taken the memories from him. They were not even bound by a bond that would stop him from actually making any more horcruxes. How much did a promise mean to the future Dark Lord?

“*Harry*.”

Emerald eyes widened as the word echoed in his head. There was a horrifying familiarity in the voice, a sibilant quality that he thought he had left behind.

"*...Potter.*"

Everything started to darken in the sides of his vision. Before everything went completely black, he grabbed his bracelet, which burned against his skin.

***

It was dark. There was a light swinging overhead in the living room, catching certain parts of furniture, but it almost seemed like parts of the very room were missing. Hadrian moved towards the dark spots, but something within him screamed *'Wrong* !' and made him back off with thundering terror.

There was a sound above him.

Hadrian's eyes followed the swinging of the lightbulb. He found himself moving out of the room and into a corridor that was tight, and luckily, fully formed. Though, he did not dare touch the walls. Something about it all touched on the realm of familiar but he could not place his finger on it.

The stairs were half-missing. Hadrian's stomach flopped uselessly at those dark voids. He made his way up the stairs, jumping over whole missing steps or carefully navigating sections. When he was upstairs, he blinked at the wide open doors. One door was half-missing in darkness, but had been blown off its hinges.

He then stopped, as he came across a very familiar room, but it was different now. The last time he had seen this room was months ago now. It was Godric's Hollow. The storage room he had discovered the Cloak, was now a nursery. There were broken toys on the floor, and a smashed crib in the middle.

Sounds of creaking floorboards and wind were left behind as Hadrian entered the nursery. It was silent in the room.

His fingers danced over the broken wooden slats of the crib, but felt nothing. Not real.

Suddenly, there was movement behind him. Hadrian turned, and his mouth opened. There, in the shadowed corner of the nursery, stood a

tall and pale man. Despite the unusual pallor of the man's skin and the slight distort and age to his features, there was no doubt who stood before him.

"Tom?"

Lips peeled back from teeth - a more animal than human gesture. "You dare use my dirty Muggle name?" The man was fast and slammed Hadrian up against a wall of the nursery. His skeletal hand wrapped around the smaller male's neck.

Hadrian scratched at the man's hands, but a pale hand seized both of his and held them down against his stomach. "Tom...stop."

The hand loosened slightly, but still squeezed at his windpipe. Those eyes were no longer cinnamon but tinged with crimson, even the whites of his eyes. He was older. They were in Harry's nursery in Godric's Hollow.

"Voldemort," he whispered, eyes blowing wide open.

"Yes, Harry Potter," Voldemort hissed. "Although, not a baby anymore."

"What is this? How are you here?" Hadrian gasped. "This is just a dream."

The hand lowered from his throat, but took Hadrian's trapped hands, pinning them down against the wall either side of him. "Not a dream, something else." The sibilant hiss wrapped around all of his words, marking his snake-like transformation. "I have been waiting, gaining strength."

"No, no, no," Hadrian chanted. "This is *wrong* ."

Voldemort leaned close, and a flush of warm breath hit the younger male's face. "Your lack of magic just makes this easier."

"You're just a memory. You are nothing." He closed his eyes and willed all of this away.

"He has not told you." There was a gleeful edge to that voice, pitching almost to that high quality that Voldemort held in the future. "It seems I was not so blinded in my youth, not so trusting of a pretty face."

“Go away.”

“Oh, we will be seeing much more of each other, Harry Potter, especially as you are so vulnerable now.”

***

Something damp was pressed against his forehead. Hadrian barely strung a thought together when he jolted upright in a seated position. He gasped huge breaths into his aching lungs.

“Sit back.” A hand pressed against his chest and he allowed himself to be pushed back onto the bed he was on.

He blinked away the tears in his eyes to see a young woman sitting by his bedside. She was very pretty, like Luna. Her blonde hair was long and flowing and she had a thoughtful expression on her face.

“What - who are you?”

“Our Lord has me attending to you whilst he finishes his meeting,” she explained. Her hands wrung the damp cloth before dipping it back into the bowl. She leant over and pressed it once more against his sweaty forehead.

Hadrian welcomed the coldness on his flushed skin. His eyes drifted closed once more, going over the horrifying dream he had. Only, it had not felt like a dream at all. It felt like the space between dreams and memory that he had met with Tom before. The space that Tom had seen the Dursey’s treatment, and Hadrian had seen the aftermath of the Riddle’s deaths.

There was the sound of the door opening.

“How is he?”

“Awake. He can hear you,” the young woman replied. “I can find nothing wrong physically or magically. Perhaps this is more of a mental trauma.”

Hadrian opened his eyes as the cloth was removed and there was a rustle of clothes and movement. He groaned as Grindelwald’s face appeared in front of him. Now he was battling two Dark Lords,

equally formidable - one in his dreams and one in real life.

“It seems, perhaps, I have been too hard on you,” Grindelwald said, perching on the bed beside Hadrian. His fingers touched raven hair.

The younger male flinched but did not have the energy to move away. It was as if he were drained, as if Voldemort’s presence had drained him. “I want…no I need my magic back.”

“You have to earn my trust, little snake.”

He breathed out slowly. “My magic is my strength. I am weak…vulnerable.”

Grindelwald hummed. “What would you do for your magic back?”

He swallowed. “Let me earn my trust.”

Those fingers carded through his hair. “What do you fear most, Hadrian?”

Green eyes stared into blue. “Death.”

Grindelwald’s mouth twisted in amusement. “A rather common fear, but one I share. Stars that burn like us, are not meant for such a common thing as death.”

Hadrian laughed, though it was hollow. If Grindelwald only knew that dying was the easy part. Death itself, that was another story. Its presence felt nothing like the inevitability of passing away. Nothing like the acceptance of going to loved ones. It was cold, inhuman and Merlin knows what it was capable of doing. What was a fate worse than death?

“Fight me.”

“What?” Hadrian moved his head so he could see the man more clearly.

Grindelwald tightened his hand in the younger male’s hair, pulling it back so that those emerald eyes stared up at the ceiling. It coaxed a sharp noise from Hadrian, who glared at the Dark Lord. Those fingers threaded back through his hair.

“When I have assessed you are well, after this episode, you and I are going to have a duel.”

“Why?”

“I want your magic released as much as you do,” the blonde man breathed. “Such power on my side, would be...sublime. However, I expect you to lose.”

“Lose?”

“Your band.” The fingers from his hair lifted and they drifted down to grasp his wrist, where the silver bracelet rested. “This will always make you submit, but I want you to demonstrate to me that you can submit without this. Only then, will you earn my trust.”

“Then you will release me from it?”

“No.” Grindelwald smiled. “But you will be one step closer, and I will allow you to use your magic.”

Protection. That was what he needed. Against Death. Against Voldemort. Only his magic and the Hallows would provide that. Submission did not come naturally to him. He enjoyed the parade around Voldemort in the future - the dominance. Riddle had chained him to the wall in that cupboard whilst he kissed and teased...begged. Submission. He was capable of it. Never would he truly submit to Grindelwald, but this was about playing the game beyond that. He needed that Hallow.

Grindelwald removed himself from the exhausted young man. Hadrian lay there, wanting to get up and not be so vulnerable. There was no way he wanted to go back to sleep and face that snake-faced *thing* again.

“Sleep, Hadrian.”

His vision dimmed a little. “No,” he gasped.

“Sleep.”

Everything fell back into darkness.

“*Harry...you join me again so soon.*”

Chapter 33

Chapter Notes

Sorry this is late again! Life is getting more hectic and I needed a short writing break from this for a few days, and the next update will probably be a few extra days than normal due to work etc.

Important note: This chapter is fragmented and is a style choice, due to the different aspects that come to work here. If you have any questions about what is happening, it will all be explained!

11 months later

The hall they were in was vast, and heavily populated. Huge red drapes hung from the staging, framing the picture that Grindelwald wanted to portray - a legacy and a show all wrapped up in one. It was the audience that rippled with trepidation as they awaited the next steps to their joint curiosity. They longed to hear words that echoed their fears, fears of the Muggles and their stupid war. And Grindelwald fed off it.

Those piercing blue eyes captured Hadrian's. His hand cradled the younger male's face, observing the changes that had happened whilst he had overseen the transformation of his young apprentice. Those emerald eyes were hardened - a thin, almost invisible scar tracing down the side of his face near his ear. Hadrian's lithely, athletic body was decked in tight-fitting robes that would move with his actions and would hide his many weapons.

"You are getting a reputation, little snake."

"Is that not what you wanted?"

Grindelwald smiled, nuzzling his face against the other male's. "Exactly." He stepped back. "Get ready."

Hadrian delved into his pocket and withdrew a mask. It was jade green that shimmered with scales. Grindelwald had taught him to glamour his appearance but he preferred that a mask was worn, to make him stand out even more. A man of show and celebrity. The

Death Eaters were different. They wore masks to protect their identities, to protect themselves whilst they fought for their side. With him being the only masked attendee, it meant that it made him stand out.

He hissed as pain shocked through his scar. His hand rose to press against his forehead. *Not now* . Hadrian threw his Occlumency shields up, but as usual, the pain sliced through them. Vision blackening, he was aware of Grindelwald's tight face as he fell forward.

***

Immediately, Hadrian was thrown up against the wall. The paintwork crumbled but there was no sound of it falling to the ground or any sensation of it pressing against his skin. Hands pinned him, skeletal and digging into his wrists.

"You seem stressed, Harry," hissed a cold, high voice in his ear.

He pushed at the body behind him. Unlike the rest of the room and house, Hadrian could very much feel Voldemort. It was the only thing he felt in this strange mind-space that Voldemort managed to pull him through at times of stress or vulnerability.

"You are a fucking parasite," Hadrian seethed.

"Such disgusting words from a pretty mouth." Cold breath ghosted in his ear. "I am very surprised that you have not offered yourself up to this old man you serve. You do like offering it, don't you? If I would have known, maybe I would not have tried to murder you. I could have kept you as a pet. A little fuck toy."

He tried to squirm free, but magic meant nothing in this space. "I would have still killed you," he answered.

"I may not hold the looks of my younger self, but we are the same."

Hadrian rolled his eyes, stilling. "What has brought this on? I thought it would be more torture on the cards. A break from your usual routine."

Oh, and there had been torture. Voldemort had the advantage of pulling Hadrian into this space that was not a dream or quite reality. It made no

sense, but the mind-Voldemort seemed to find it amusing. The little amount of magic he had been 'allowed' in the first few months had made this monster grow inside him. A lot of the time he thought it was his conscience. That Voldemort was just a mere figment of his imagination, led by guilt. It did not quite fit, but Hadrian could not think of another reason Voldemort (from the future) would appear in his head.

And the man was good at torture. He would strangle Hadrian, try to break his arms and legs in frustration and worst of all, use something akin to the Crucio on him. Where Hadrian could not summon a single spell. Powerless.

When he woke up, the mental pain was tough to bare, and there was a shadow of an ache anywhere which the dream-Voldemort had touched and tortured.

"I do not like him touching you."

"Why?"

"Because you are mine."

Hadrian laughed, but it soon stopped when Voldemort's body pressed flush against his. "What are you doing?" he hissed. "And I am not yours."

"I saw how my younger self had you in that cupboard. He and I are the same."

"You are deluded."

"You are not to allow that man to touch you."

"Try saying 'no'," he bit out.

"How many times have you said 'no' to him?"

Hadrian stilled. He shoved the man behind him, and was surprised to make some movement. Turning around, he raised his head to take in the bone-white skin and the hollows in the face that was familiar and yet not.

"What do you want?"

Lips curled into a mockery of a smile. "I want out of this prison." A long finger tapped on Hadrian's head. "I do not belong in this time. You forced us both here and now I have no tether, no purpose but to exist."

"What?" Hadrian blinked as the room moved. Often, the dream-Voldemort

went on these strange rants about being 'the only one' and 'unnatural, even by unnatural standards'. None of it ever made sense. Anytime that Hadrian questioned it, dream-Voldemort would just laugh and give him a sneer.

The surroundings jolted...warping at the sides.

The nursery disappeared and then reappeared. Things started to fade to grey at the sides and Voldemort was moving very slowly. He shifted and everything moved with him.

***

"Hadrian."

He coughed, eyes flying wide open to look into piercing blue. Hadrian allowed himself to be sat up from where he lay on the floor, his cough subsiding. He looked around, seeing the back of the stage and he heard the sound of the excited crowd in the background.

"Take your potion."

Without a thought, he took the vial from the older man and drank it down. Grindelwald believed that they were signs of stress, a by-product of time travel that could not be explained with the lack of knowledge they had. Hadrian knew that it wasn't that. He was having delusions of a Voldemort trapped between the one he knew from the future, and the one he knew now in the present. Maybe it was his mind filling a gap with the stress of the kidnapping.

The potion was a source of vitamins and a form of Pepper-Up. It did not make everything perfect, but it would be enough to keep him ticking over.

"You should sit here and rest."

He glared up at the man as the cobwebs were blown away in his mind. However, he still felt the dark presence of Voldemort, almost as if he were watching behind Hadrian's eyes.

"No." He stood, refusing the assistance of Grindelwald. "This was nothing." Hadrian took the mask from the Dark Lord and slid it onto his face.

“I must insist.”

Hadrian’s mouth pressed into a very thin line. With *that* tone of voice, there would be no arguing with the Dark Lord. He yanked off the mask, glaring as Isabella (one of Grindelwald’s advisors) dragged up a chair. Sitting down, he refused to look at Grindelwald, who made an amusing huffing sound before he walked off to the stage.

The rest of the backstage was pretty empty. Most of Grindelwald’s people were either in amidst the crowds, or with him on the stage. His fingers danced on the silver cuff that still rested against his wrist. Despite promises, Grindelwald had not taken it off. He doubted it would be taken off until Hadrian really proved his loyalty, like killing Dumbledore.

He frowned as he felt a movement of magic.

Very light. Dumbledore? The man was practically swamped in light magic. It was not abnormal for attacks to be held at these rallys. At the last one, Hadrian had been there, and had gotten involved in protecting Grindelwald. However, he refused to kill for the man.

If it was Dumbledore, there would be others.

Hadrian stood up, swaying slightly as pain lanced through his head. Grindelwald’s voice boomed across the avid audience, drawing out cheers...some hesitant. His magic had been capped by the man, which left him a little vulnerable with the lack of people around him.

Something was wrong.

There was a sudden scream and burst of energy. Hadrian ran towards the stage. Between the heavy curtains, he could see the flashes of spells zipping across from the audience to the stage. Still, the bracelet did not give. Grindelwald was too caught up in the battle to remember Hadrian’s tether to him.

He burst out onto the stage, yanking his mask on. Ice-blue eyes connected with his.

His magic came storming back to him. Without a wand, he thrust up his hands and a massive, green bubble rose up around the stage. The fighting stopped. The intruders outside of the bubble kept throwing spells, but they just disintegrated.

Dumbledore broke free of the robed attackers - Aurors, most probably

- and stood in front of the stage. His eyes flickered from Grindelwald to the masked man.

Hadrian's hands were still raised, but it was a temporary measure. He did not have the strength to keep something so strong up for a large period of time. This was of his creation, moulding together bits of different spells he experimented with. His magic tutor - Frederick - insisted upon that.

"This needs to end, Gellert," Dumbledore said, voice heavy as he regarded his past friend...lover?

"I agree, Albus. But you see, I have something that gives me an advantage." He caressed the Elder Wand in his hand. "Or maybe, a couple of things." His gaze flickered over to Hadrian.

"This is between us."

Hadrian saw the hand signal, and dropped the barrier. Anarchy broke out. Grindelwald and Dumbledore instantly collided. Hadrian discarded a few stunners sent his way, by Dumbledore's little army. He hissed out a command, drawing on his core. Instantly, snake-like bonds flew from the air and wrapped up the group of five Aurors who had been targeting him. They fell to the ground, screaming as the robes grew actual snake-heads.

He was about to unleash another spell to help Grindelwald, when something caught his attention. Something different, and yet distantly familiar. Hadrian turned, frowning, seeing a dark shadow move across to behind the stage.

Hesitating, to leave the scene, he cast a quick look to see the intense battles taking place. Hadrian slipped behind the curtains. There was nobody there. At least, none of Grindelwald's followers.

He gasped as ice, cold hands gripped his robes and pulled him into the darkness. Hadrian struggled, drawing his magic up.

"Mr Peverell, stop."

Emerald eyes flew open, seeing a shadow of red eyes in the darkness that had swallowed them. "Vampire?" he uttered. Then it hit him. "Sanguini?"

A flash of too-white teeth, confirmed. "We do not have much time."

“No, I can’t go from here. I need…” he trailed off, throat sticking.

A freezing finger slid over the silver band. “I know,” the vampire breathed. “You have a powerful friend.” Something warm and weighty slipped onto Hadrian’s finger. “But you need to be careful. Everyone will use you, Mr Peverell.”

“What is this? What’s going on?”

Sanguini chuckled. “Your friend found my gift to you, the coin. We have a...deal, of sorts.”

Hadrian froze as the ring that was on his finger grew hot...burning hot. His eyes grew wide. “What is this? It hurts!” He tried to tug it off, but it was stuck fast. “What are you doing?” His magic did not respond to his panicked pleas for help.

He was barely aware of cold breath against his ear, then his neck, until pain exploded. White-hot, burning pain erupted in his veins. Hadrian cried out, hands clawing against Sanguini’s robes. His head swam and then heat gathered in his stomach as he felt a *suck* at his bitten throat.

Then, it was gone. Hadrian fell to his knees, stumbling down and out of the shadows. His throat and head throbbed. The ring on his finger was still searing hot and dark...he could feel the intense darkness of it.

The glint of gold caught his eye, and the last thing he saw before he slipped away into unconsciousness, was the sign of the Deathly Hallows etched onto the black stone of Tom’s family ring.

***

“ *He is sick, my Lord.”*

“...attacked his neck...no other signs of anything else…”

“...his magic gotten darker?”

“...yes...yes...and he keeps his hand cradled to him...no, nothing...no reason for that action...maybe...defense mechanism?”

***

Fingers threaded through his hair. It was nice...soothing. The digits were a caress, delicately moving through the always-messy strands. His body felt weightless, empty.

He shuddered as his eyes opened. Hadrian's breath caught in the back of his throat as he gazed into the cinnamon eyes of Tom Riddle. He did not move...or breathe. Those eyes held him down.

Instead of moving or speaking, he stared into the face of his old...friend...lover? They had never gotten to the point of discussing what they were. He was exactly how he remembered him. A thick, dark curl hung loosely over a pale forehead, teasing just above those brown-crimson eyes.

"Are you real?" he finally uttered.

Tom blinked before those lips twitched at the side. "Do I feel real?"

There was warmth to those fingers that still threaded through his hair and skimmed his scalp. "Yes, but so many things feel real in dreams."

Dream-Voldemort was always real...cold and warm. The rest of the surroundings - his broken nursery - were always empty of feeling or life. He tilted his head to the side, and then stiffened.

He knew the room that they were in. In his mind's eyes, he could see the bodies strewn across the floor by the dying fire. Glassy eyes staring into nothingness, whilst mouths hung open in horror.

Hadrian was sprawled across a large sofa, head pillowed in Tom's lap. He moved away from the fingers and sat up. There was no real bounce to the chair he was sat upon, nor feel of any particular cloth.

"This isn't real," he rasped out. He stood up, turning to face the Tom Riddle that he knew from his time in the past. "This is a dream. Another dream."

Tom lounged back on the sofa, his arm spread out over the back of it, as he crossed his long legs. "He is gone."

Hadrian stared at him. "This is another one of your games." Somehow,

the dream-Voldemort had morphed into his younger self. That's what he wanted to believe, but something felt different. There was not the aggressive, charged energy he felt from dream-Voldemort. No, this 'Tom Riddle' before him felt like a brief flash of the dark and seductive energy he knew personally.

"You needn't worry about that...parasite, any longer. He is gone. He never belonged."

He swallowed. "But how?"

"I need you to accept me."

Hadrian blinked. "What?"

Tom stood, a fluid movement that barely seemed human. He stepped closer, looking down into Hadrian's emerald, green eyes. "I have been sent to help you. To free you. To make you ours."

"This isn't making any sense, Tom."

"Kiss me, accept me." Warm lips brushed over his, in the tease of a kiss.

Hadrian held himself still. He wanted to, with every fibre of his being. This was his handsome Tom, the one that he had opened himself to. The one he wanted to save. "What is the price?"

"Price?"

"There is always a price with you, Tom," he answered, eyes sweeping over the other male's lips, which hovered just over his.

"I have given you a gift, a very precious gift," he murmured. A hand, warm, took his and brought it up between them.

The gold ring glinted between them, the black stone reflecting the gleam of the fire. A triangle was etched onto the smooth stone, a circle and a line.

"It will go nicely with your Cloak."

Emerald eyes shot up to meet that familiar, cinnamon gaze. "Tom…" he breathed.

"Thank me, with a kiss, Hadrian."

He leaned forward and pressed his lips against those that awaited. It was warm. Tom let his hand go, instead his arms wrapped around the smaller male and dragged him close. Hadrian fell into the kiss...and stumbled into darkness.

***

Hadrian came too, screaming.

His nerves were on fire, head throbbing in tandem with the rapid beat of his heart. Everything hurt. There were sounds everywhere...crashing, yelling and breaking. His stomach lurched.

Hand grabbed him and pushed him over. Hadrian vomited, the acidity burning his nose and back of his throat. He weakly opened his eyes to find himself in bed, the smell of sick making him groan. His limbs were weak and his head was sore. Hadrian felt something trickle down his forehead, and a shaky hand rose to come into contact with blood from his scar.

“What?” he whispered, throat dry. He erupted into coughing.

When he drew up his hand, the silver bracelet slipped off his wrist.

“Come.”

“Sanguini?”

Arms gathered him against a thin chest. “Shh. Drink this.” A vial was held to his lips.

Weakness seized his limbs, and all he could do was accept whatever potion was given him. It was sweet and sparked his nerves, not with pain but with some vitality.

There was an almighty explosion that rocked the bed that he was in, and dust fell from the ceiling.

“Time to go. Your strength will regenerate very quickly.” Sanguini lifted Hadrian with considerable strength. “Time to free you, raven.”

Chapter 34

Chapter Notes

> Thank you so much for the lovely comments from the last chapter. I managed to reply to some, but will hopefully be better at replying to them this week!
>
> I hope you enjoy this, as much as I enjoyed writing it!

Sanguini smelt of ash, smoke and something dark and metallic. His nose was half-buried in mulberry robes as his trembling hands clung to the lapels. His forehead throbbed in time with his heartbeat, the pain seemingly reaching down into his very being.

A scream rose up from somewhere nearby.

What was happening?

“Release him, you creature!” a man grunted from the left.

The vampire hissed out something and Hadrian felt a swell of something dark that he recognised as blood magic. Of course. There was a hideous squelch.

Hadrian shifted, feeling his magic flare to life as the potion began to work. He could have sobbed in relief. Almost a year...a year of magic not in his control. His arm felt empty without the silver bracelet, but now he had the ring on. A Deathly Hallow.

Emerald eyes flickered out of the safety of Sanguini’s grasp, to see absolute anarchy unfolding in Nurmengard. There were more vampires, clad in the same robes as his personal vampire rescuer, performing some strange kinds of magic that blistered through their air. The floor was bathed in blood. Bodies were scattered all over the floor in various states. Joining the vampires, there were *Hogwarts* students. Slytherins to be specific. Black and green robes danced in various duels with some of Grindelwald’s finest.

It was what he had hoped the DA would become.

There were the sounds of apparition as Aurors started to appear, joining the students and vampires in their battles. If the Slytherins were here…

“Tom?” he croaked. His scar warmed as Sanguini strode down the corridor.

“He is here. Fighting, with everyone else.”

“I need to…it has to be me to...kill him.” Hadrian started to fight against the hands that held him, his limbs feeling like his again and strength returning.

“I am taking you to him, raven. Stay still for the moment,” Sanguini said, voice deep and lulling.

He grumbled but took in a deep breath, drawing in strength. Whatever that potion was, it was working fast. There was a residual headache, but Hadrian almost felt normal again. He flicked a *Protego* up when a sudden buzz of yellow magic came their way. Sanguini huffed out a muted ‘thank you’, before slipping into an open room. He aided Hadrian in standing on his feet.

The vampire’s eyes gleamed with a silver edge, his pale skin gleaming in the moonlight that poured into the wrecked room. There was a body next to them, her head almost ripped off. He recognised her as meeting with Grindelwald a few times. Hadrian bounced on the balls of his feet, feeling his magic buzz. Tom was near. He could feel him.

“I need to go and help Tom,” Hadrian said.

Sanguini put a hand on his shoulder before he could move away. “There may come a time, where you need to seek safety. I told you, everyone will use you.”

“Including you?” he replied sharply.

“At least I would be honest about it, raven.” The hand on his shoulder squeezed. “Go.”

Hadrian did not need another word. He shot out of the room and almost bumped into two familiar faces. “Cassius? Silas?” Their faces were ashen, dust on their robes but their eyes were alive with the fight. “Tom, where is Tom?”

“Grindelwald, up ahead,” Cassius breathed, nodding down where they had just come from. “Hadrian-”

He disapparated down the corridor, to Grindelwald’s private rooms. Instantly, he threw some non-verbal stunners at two people who were

attacking a group of Aurors. He did not wait there. Instead, he slipped into the Dark Lord's rooms.

" *Accio,* wand," he whispered. His holly wand flew through the rooms and into his awaiting hand. Grindelwald only allowed him access to his wand with a trainer, and when only using very complex magic. Everything else had been non-verbal. It felt like getting a handshake from an old friend.

Hadrian paused at the scene before him. There was a flurry of magic. The air was *alive* and pungent with it all, making it almost hard to breathe. Grindelwald was smirking, the Elder Wand flourishing in the air. Tom...he was a warrior. He danced around the older man's spells and thundered back with his own magic. His chest hurt, just seeing the other male after so long.

The room was a mess, most furniture destroyed. There were dead or stunned people everywhere.

Cinnamon eyes flickered to him as Hadrian strode over to join the fray. He walked over to Grindelwald's side, and both of them paused their duel.

Grindelwald grinned, his hand brushing Hadrian's jaw. "I do believe that your friend here, is here to get you back, little snake."

"Really?" He leaned into the touch, watching the blue eyes twinkle.

"Why do we not show him what you have learnt?" The man's accent was heavy, some exhaustion having set into his body during the duel.

Hadrian smiled. "Gladly." He turned the smile onto Tom.

Tom's lip curved up at the side, a bead of sweat trickling down into the collar of his robes. He raised his wand and *struck* .

Their wands exploded with golden light, the spider web of magic knocking Grindelwald back. Hadrian held his wand steady. "Tom," he breathed. His scar burned with heat, magic swelling.

Cinnamon eyes flickered to the ring on Hadrian's finger, standing out from where he held the wand. "Hadrian. *Together* ?"

The slip into Parseltongue made his wand dip slightly, the golden bead of their joined magic sliding towards him a little. It had been so long. He wielded the language in his spell casting, but it was another

thing to hear it from another's mouth. " *Yes* ." He wanted to keep the *Priori Incantatem* going, to drink in the other male's appearance and to bask in the darkness of his magic. If only the web lasted forever, and all they had was each other.

But the world waited.

Their eyes collided with meaning and both of them withdrew their magic. Grindelwald immediately fired a spell at Tom, but Hadrian dismissed it, knowing the counter-curse to the flesh-eating spell the dark wizard had cast at him many times during duels.

"Hadrian, what are you doing? Kill him," Grindelwald ground out. He shook his sleeve back, exposing the silver bracelet. "I command you."

His stomach lurched. Of course. How could he have been so blind? "You forced me to obey you. The bracelet was more than trapping my magic," he uttered, a heady mix of anger and relief quelling the sickness.

Grindelwald half-bared his teeth. "You saw my vision. You know what the Muggles will do."

Tom sighed. "We don't have time for this."

Sure enough, things were getting louder behind them. The Aurors were getting closer, and it needed to end this way.

"You would choose him?"

Hadrian smiled, though it was empty. "I choose me." He raised his wand, knowing that Tom echoed his movement.

Grindelwald sneered, his handsome features distorting. "Fools." He attacked.

The two Slytherin's erected a shield, moving next to each other. They dropped it and struck back. There was a myriad of lights as the two boys duelled. However, Hadrian's other hand had slipped to his trousers, where there were a number of small, concealed blades threaded into them. They were still the ones from the fight. When was that? Last night? Yesterday?

He drew it out, never taking his eyes from Grindelwald, whose face was red and sweaty under the pressure of their magic. The Elder Wand was the only protection he had.

“ *Disarm* ,” he hissed to Tom. “ *It will be enough* .”

There was an acknowledged grunt.

Their wordless ‘ *Expelliarmus* ’ burst through the clear shield that Grindelwald swiftly threw up. His ice blue eyes were huge as he was knocked from his feet. The Elder Wand jumped through the air, clattering to the space between Tom and Hadrian.

As Tom bent down to pick it up, Hadrian made his move. Grindelwald was on his back, a shaking hand moving up to his chest.

Blood trickled from the side of his mouth; the rattling sound that came out, wet and fleshy sounding. Had the spell shattered him? Eyes blinked up at him.

“Does it hurt?” Hadrian asked lightly, his fingers drifting over the mussed, white-blonde strands of hair that were plastered on the man’s forehead as he knelt by the older man’s side. “I hope it does.” The side of the blade kissed against the exposed column of the dark wizard’s neck.

Grindelwald gave another wet gargle, blood frothing out.

“After you killed my grandparents and put that bracelet on me…I made a vow to myself.” He grinned down at the man. “I would kill you and it would hurt. Now, we have the final Deathly Hallow as well.”

Blood spluttered up to stain the front of Hadrian’s robes. He pressed the blade in, opening up a deep, crimson thread into the white flesh. And he watched. He watched life bleed out, not just through the neck but also those eyes.

Tom stood behind him, a silent figure, even when the Aurors burst through into the room. Hadrian dropped the blade, exhaustion creeping up on him as the potion burned out of his system. The aches returned to his joints and the throb beat strongly against his forehead. A hand cradled the back of his head as Hadrian closed his eyes and succumbed once more.

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Tom was asleep.

In the sunlight, the soft rays drifted over high cheekbones and pale skin. His dark hair fell in waves, a little shorter at the sides than he remembered, but the loose curls on top remained. Those long legs were crossed over each other, as he half-slouched in the chair. His fingers held onto the dark, notched wood of the Elder Wand. On its grip, was a white band with runes etched into it.

The Slytherin looked older. His cheekbones were sharper and it looked like he had grown even taller. Eleven months had gone by. Yule and their birthdays had swept away with the sands of time. Everyone would be ready to take their NEWTs and leave Hogwarts. Most in his year were eighteen now. *He* was eighteen.

His gaze shifted over to the window, where he could see blue skies. The window was slightly ajar and the cool, February breeze drifted in and tickled the bunch of flowers that stood on the sill.

It was Hogwarts...home. He was surprised to feel the castle around him. What he had expected was a prison, maybe even Azkaban. He had been Grindelwald's follower, after all. His body felt normal, if not stronger.

His eyes returned to Tom, feeling warmth bloom in his chest.

There was a knock at the door. Hadrian swallowed, shifting up on the big, fluffy pillows. Tom began to stir next to him, just as the door opened.

Four adults came into the room, all of which were familiar to Hadrian. The Minister of Magic, Healer Roberts, Headmaster Dippet and Professor Dumbledore all strode in. Emerald eyes hardened at the row of men that all instantly regarded him with suspicion and distrust.

"Mr Peverell, how are you feeling?"

He squared his jaw at Roberts' words before he forced himself to relax. "Fine."

"When can he leave?" Riddle asked, his smooth voice capturing the men's attention.

The Minister cleared his throat. "Very soon, we hope. There are a few things we need to go over, for security reasons." His fingers twirled the end of his moustache. "We have managed to keep him out of any

trial, but we will need his statement."

"You have the modified *Restringo* band as evidence of mind manipulation," Tom countered.

"Can you all not talk over me like I am not here?" Hadrian bit out. He waited until all eyes were on him. "Can someone please tell me what happened?"

Healer Roberts moved over to his bedside, removing an orb from his pocket. Hadrian eyed it as it hovered over his body, cringing away from the unknown device. "What do you last remember?"

He frowned, rubbing his left temple. "I remember Grindelwald taking me to the Hall...and then an attack." His eyes flicked to Dumbledore. "You fought with him. Then...I was attacked? I fell unconscious…" *Then he had seen that vision of Tom, asking to accept him* . "When I awoke, Sanguini was there. He took the band off me, and helped me out of my room. I told him I needed to get to Tom."

"How did you know Mr Riddle would be there?" the Minister asked.

"I-I felt him." His hand pressed against his chest. "His magic. I wanted Grindelwald gone...for what he had done."

"What did he do?"

Hadrian swallowed, averting his eyes. His heart rattled against his rib cage like a prisoner. "He killed people I once knew. He used me, tried to mould me into his apprentice...or whatever. All the while, I hated him but I could never say no. I thought they were my thoughts of submission but when that band came off...I became me again."

"Minister, this may be too much for Mr Peverell right now," Roberts interjected, drawing the orb away.

"I thought you said he was healthy." The Minister raised an eyebrow up at the Healer.

"He is, physically. Mentally, we have no idea of the damage caused by this experience. Eleven months under serious mind magic, torture and Grindelwald's influence."

"Grindelwald's influence is why we cannot take any chances," Dumbledore said, finally.

Hadrian gave a hollow laugh. “You could have taken him on and saved many lives, if you hadn’t been best friends in the past.” He pinned the pale blue eyes with his burning gaze. “Have you told them about your dabble into blood magic with Grindelwald? A promise not to hurt each other. How many lives were lost because of that stupid promise? Everyone knows you could have ended it...ended him.”

Dumbledore flinched, his face tired and the growing lines on his face more prominent. He was about to reply, when Dippet came in. “Albus has admitted his mistakes, Hadrian. He attended the rally to get you back, and right his wrongs with Grindelwald.”

He snorted, folding his arms. “Well, he is dead now.”

“Thanks to you and Tom,” Dippet replied softly. “And the world owes you both for it.”

And the future he knew, was completely broken. Grindelwald had killed his grandparents, giving no line to the Potter legacy. The dark wizard had not been thwarted by Dumbledore’s hand, and locked in his castle prison. He was dead, killed by two eighteen year old Hogwarts students...Tom Riddle aka Voldemort one of them.

“How did you find me?” he uttered, glancing at Riddle.

The Minister closed his eyes and shook his head, features etched in pain.

“Our magic,” Tom answered, breaking the short silence. “I had wanted to work with the Minister, but I was ‘too young’.” His face remained impassive. “So, I found the coin in your possessions that you left with me. Sanguini agreed to help me, and once we had your blood...we tracked you down using our joint magic. Of course, the rest of our friends wanted to come, even if it meant putting their lives on the line.”

“Are they all okay?”

There was that tug of lips again, that was Tom’s smile. The sign of it warmed his chest and Hadrian released his crossed arms.

“Yes, Hadrian, they are. Just bruises and broken bones.”

“It has been a political nightmare,” the Minister grouched. “However, what is done is done. It seems I underestimated you, Mr Riddle.” The man regarded the younger male for a moment before turning.

“Armando, please keep these boys away from the student body for a few days. We need to get this story right. The public will need their questions answered soon.”

Hadrian looked down at his hand, where the thick ring sat. He ran his finger over the shiny, black stone and felt a tremble of dark magic emanate from it. This ring, he had seen on Dumbledore’s finger, eating away at the flesh around it. However, now, it looked innocent enough and he felt protective over it. A Deathly Hallow. The Cloak. The Stone. The Wand. They had all three.

The Minister swept out of the rooms, beckoning Healer Roberts to follow. Dumbledore’s mouth was a tight line as he remained in the room with Dippet.

“We will house the two of you in a private wing for a couple of days,” Dippet said. “It would be best if we move you as soon as possible, due to the amount of attention all of this has gained. Mr Riddle can fill you in...catch you up. Are you well enough to move?”

“I haven’t tried yet.”

“Armando, perhaps extra observation is necessary first,” Dumbledore said quietly.

Hadrian glared at the man before throwing the stark white sheets off him. He maneuvered off the bed, wincing when vertigo hit him from laying down so long. Steadying himself with a hand on the bed, he took in a deep breath before standing. He was dressed in a hospital gown that let in too much air for it to be comfortable.

Dippet did not reply to Dumbledore. He observed Hadrian as he straightened and thrust his chin in the air. “Come along, the both of you.” He put a hand on the door. “Tom, can you disillusion both you and Hadrian, please. Follow closely.”

As Hadrian walked forward, he felt Tom move to his side. His skin prickled with heat at the proximity and his magic jolted so much that he swayed suddenly. A hand rested against the small of his back, steadying him. When the disillusionment washed over them, it was like a warm embrace.

He stepped away from the hand and followed Dippet out. Dumbledore brought up the rear and Tom stayed nearby. The Hospital Wing was the same as it always was. The Minister was standing in the doorway to Roberts’ office. It was silent, no patients.

When they emerged from the Wing, it was another story.

Hadrian almost stalled at the vast amount of flowers *everywhere* . There were huge bouquets, freshly plucked wildflowers and wreaths. They were stacked upon each other, hanging from walls...floating.

He had thought that people would hate him. *The Daily Prophet* had demonised him at the beginning of his kidnapping and he had been gone so long that people would have thought that he was working with Grindelwald. To a point, he had been.

Small groups of students loitered around but Dippet shooed them along to their lessons and threatened with detentions.

Hadrian worried his bottom lip through his teeth, heat rising to his face as a breeze tickled his legs, bringing his attention to the pyjamas that he wore. He recognised them from his time at Hogwarts - navy blue with golden thread - and they still fit perfectly. Meanwhile, Riddle (who had fallen into step beside him) had taken on a growth spurt.

Everything in the corridors was the same, but what did he expect? Hogwarts did not really change in the forty-odd years from his real time.

Hadrian startled as a cloak was suddenly settling around his shoulders. He glared up at Tom, who just gave him a neutral look and gave him space once more. His hands came up to secure the clasp of the large cloak against the base of his throat. The silver was cold against his bare skin, eliciting a shudder from him. It was not as cold at Hogwarts as it was in Nurmengard but, if the disillusionment failed for some reason, he would be stood there in his night wear in front of everyone.

Dippet led them up to the next floor via a portrait that Hadrian had not known about. He logged its location, but could not manage to hear or see any sort of password the Headmaster used. The corridors were mostly empty, and clearly classes were in session. It was odd to think that they had all resumed their usual lessons for almost a whole year, while Hadrian was stabbed and tortured into a weapon. Thank Merlin that Grindelwald had not begun to wield him, that Hadrian had sought perfection and pushed back the dark wizard. Hadrian had only appeared at the last five rallys - the first one where he had to protect Grindelwald from a vocal and rogue wizard who tried to attack him. The result had not been pretty. Had earned him a quick

reputation.

“Hadrian?” Tom stood in front of him.

He blinked. Hadrian had stopped walking at some point and was gazing at a wall. “Yes?”

Wasn’t that what he is to Riddle as well? A weapon. He had been used to see into the future, a mismatched power control, with Riddle always having the upper hand.

Riddle’s lips were pressed into a tight line. He stepped back, gesturing for Hadrian to go into the room they stood at. There was a portrait, which had swung open. Hadrian walked in, and felt the disillusionment charm fall as Tom followed. The portrait closed behind them.

It was a cosy sitting area, with the fire lit and three comfortable chairs around a small table. It was a world away from the lavish spread of furniture that Grindelwald had decorated their wing of the castle with. Hadrian’s room had been huge, connected to Grindelwald’s. Only, Hadrian could not enter the main rooms without permission. Most of the days were spent with his tutors, or at his desk at Grindelwald’s planning room, studying. No one had really spoken to him much about anything other than magic and the importance of defense.

Hadrian jolted back out of his thoughts when Dippet passed into his view. However, the Headmaster was on his way out. The sound of a portrait closing confirmed it.

“Hadrian.”

He looked at Riddle. The boy - no, man - stood in front of the fire, his dark school robes tinged with amber from the flame. Never before had he looked so much like Voldemort - face pale and eyes drilling into his. What made Hadrian so different from him now? He had turned a man inside out, in front of a crowd, just to show strength...to show that Grindelwald was protecting. The only person who would kill the Hungarian, would be him.

But even with those thoughts, something deep within him called to Tom. It was deeper than it had ever been before. In the past, it was just a feeling of warmth and a strange thrum to his body. This, this was different. It was bone-deep, the longing and the feeling of wanting to jump into Riddle’s body and just take up residence there.

Things had changed when Sanguini had arrived and had shoved that ring on him. Dream-Voldemort had not returned. Instead, he was replaced with Tom; Tom as he knew him. Then Tom just appeared in Numengard with a small army.

“What did you do, Tom?”

Chapter 35

Chapter Notes

> So sorry - updates are quite sporadic at the moment, I am hoping to have more time soon to write.
>
> Thank you to the comments from the last chapter, they mean a lot!

“I did whatever necessary to free you,” came the smooth reply.

Hadrian’s hands clenched into fists by his sides. “Answer me properly, Tom.”

His handsome head tilted to the side, the amber light licking up the side of his face. It made the hollows of his cheeks darken with shadows. “You should sit down.”

“I want to stand.”

Tom frowned before shrugging his shoulders. “Where shall we start?”

Hadrian swallowed, his knees wobbling. He was still feeling off from the whole experience, and whatever had been done to him. Wobbling slightly, he made his way over to a single chair that looked comfortable. It was also facing the other male, who did not budge from where he stood by the fire.

“Anywhere. I just want answers, Riddle,” he replied, running a hand down his face. Hadrian flinched when he opened his eyes, to see the Slytherin looming over him.

Tom’s fingers slid under his jaw, lifting it so their eyes connected. “Back to ‘Riddle’?” Those cinnamon eyes flashed. “Why don’t I show you what I got up to, just to get you back?” He paused. “Go on, have a look.”

“*Legilimens*,” Hadrian breathed, and tumbled into Tom’s mind...

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“Hadrian!”

Hadrian turned, in the arms of the unknown man. There were a few cuts on the side of his face, and he was pale with magic exhaustion. As the power cascaded out of Tom, his body bent at the waist with the effort. He threw everything he had at the raven-haired boy, knowing exactly who he was fighting with. Grindelwald was here.

But Tom watched in horror as Hadrian’s eyes widened in his direction. Before he could turn around, a green light flared from the other boy, hitting someone behind Riddle. There was a distinct sound of a body hitting the floor. Tom staggered from the magic exhaustion, his brain fogging even as he became aware of the screams and feel of intense magic.

Then nothing.

His chest squeezed with pain as Hadrian’s presence disappeared. His knees gave out and he slipped into darkness.

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“This is ridiculous.” A newspaper thunked down on the Headmaster’s desk.

Dippet’s mouth tightened into a thin line. His eyes, however, did not leave Tom’s face to look at the headlines. The old man knew. He had already seen.

“First, he destroys Hadrian’s living relatives…but this? Even if he does manage to get free, the public will rip him apart,” Tom hissed.

Finally, Dippet’s eyes moved. “Sit, Mr Riddle.”

Tom’s nose wrinkled before he reluctantly took a seat opposite the Headmaster. The old man looked as if he had aged an extra hundred years in the space of a few days. There was a weight to his eyes and his wrinkles were etched deep, cutting into his pale face.

Dippet settled back in his chair. “I am very sure that Hadrian will survive, despite his grandparent’s deaths. From what I have read on Time magic, I theorise that he will still exist in this reality.” His fingers dusted over The Daily Prophet *, the headline in black, bold letters: ‘Is Hogwarts harbouring dark wizards?’. “It was a mistake to use the Peverell name, for Hadrian’s*

identity. I understand that it was a rash decision and one I live to regret."

"It was a target on his back. Everyone knows he is after the Hallows."

"At that time, Mr Riddle, I was unaware of the importance of the boy." Dippet sighed, eyes hardening. "What is done, is done. We can only hope that Grindelwald is unable to glean information about you *from Hadrian's mind."*

Tom bristled. "Regardless, we need to get him back."

The older man shook his head. "Tom…we are a school. You are a student here and my responsibility is to deliver you an education and keep you safe."

An eyebrow quirked up. "Like how you kept Hadrian safe?"

"And I am not allowing you to embark on a suicide mission to try and save him. You may be a powerful young wizard, Mr Riddle, but Grindelwald is highly experienced and a very real danger." Dippet's eyes roamed over Tom's pissed off face. "Why do you care?"

"What?"

The Headmaster sipped his water. "He knows who you are, who you could be."

The Slytherin barely kept his eyes from rolling. Instead, his jaw clenched. "I will remember this." He turned on his heel and swept out of the office.

***

Tom sat at the huge table in the Chamber, fingers drumming on the thick wood. Cinnamon eyes drifted over to the seat that Hadrian had frequented so often. His jaw tightened, pushing through the remnants of a bruise that still marred the pale skin on his lower cheek. Wincing, Tom forced himself to relax a little.

In doing so, his gaze flew over the paintings…the fireplace…the bookshelves…and something else. He stood. Tom strode over to the bookcases, before he found what he was looking for. Breaking the disillusionment spell, a small chest suddenly appeared.

He opened it.

There were a few items laying on top of a silvery cloak. Elegant fingers plucked out a coin. He held it up to the light, observing the Vampiric sigil and a small hole in the centre. It was a long time that he spent staring at the item, before shaking his head and placing it back. There were a few other trinkets, but the next item he drew out was The Tales of Beedle the Bard. *He frowned, opening the pages…and finding notes upon notes crammed into the pages all in Hadrian's spidery handwriting. On the inside front cover, the Deathly Hallows symbol was labelled. The triangle: My Cloak. The line: Grindelwald's Wand - Elder Wand. The circle: Gaunt Ring (Possible horcrux).*

"Oh Hadrian," Tom muttered. His fingers skimmed over the silvery cloak before he looked down at the ring on his finger.

***

Lestrange shifted as Tom's eyes moved over each and every one of them. "My Lord?"

"Yes, Lestrange?"

"Can I speak freely?"

That phrase made everyone's eyes raise in a mix of trepidation and horror at Silas' move.

Tom's mouth twisted. "Speak."

A tongue came out to wet dry lips. "We have all grown to respect Hadrian, but is it wise to risk all of our lives for him? He does not exactly join in with us for our meetings, or even really show respect to you…our Lord."

Tom lazily stroked the top of Onyx's broad head. "You question my decision?"

Lestrange's back stiffened. "M-my Lord-"

"Crucio."

Silas' body twitched, his limbs jerking spasmodically against the wooden

frame of the chair. However, the spell was lifted very quickly. Sweat dripped from Lestrange's temples, black hair stuck to his forehead.

Everyone's eyes fell down to the table, not daring any eye contact with the irate Slytherin.

"Hadrian is...very…" he paused, "...important to our cause. Hadrian's capacity for dark magic is very similar to my own, and we need that back on side. Grindelwald is a weak dark wizard in comparison to both mine and Hadrian's power." He commanded all of the attention in the room. "So, you will all train and train hard. Abraxas has put together a series of initial lessons that you will all be part of. Tonight, I am going to take you down to the Chamber of Secrets."

"Salazar Slytherin's?" Dolohov breathed, eyes darting up. "It exists?"

Tom's mouth curved into an indulgent smile. "I will show you all the true power of Salazar's work."

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Hadrian stumbled back, away from him. He blinked and shook his head, pulling his mental barriers back up so that his mind was his own again. However, he could see Tom's memories flickering and merging with his own memories.

"The Hallows was an interesting development."

He glared. "You should have left my belongings alone."

Riddle raised an eyebrow before walking over to a small table that housed a variety of refreshments. He poured two glasses of water, handing one over to Hadrian, who took it reluctantly.

"Then you should not have chosen the Chamber, and somewhere so blindingly obvious." Tom sipped his water. "However, you were saved due to that stupid choice. I would never have found out about your little quest for the Hallows...or the coin that linked you to Sanguini." He sat down on the wing-backed chair near the fireplace. "And...as a result, Grindelwald is gone...we are hailed as the heroes of wizarding Europe...the world even, and we became the Masters of Death."

Hadrian stiffened. Was it worth it? He was free, but at what cost? Grindelwald was dead and free of a Dark Lord...for a while. Riddle had become more powerful than before. Tom Riddle was now deemed a hero. He was the Master of the Elder Wand.

" *We* are not the Masters of Death," Hadrian replied, tightly. "You have the wand...and I have my cloak and...the ring." His eyes flickered to the weight on his hand. He put the glass of water on the floor and tried to slide the ring off but it would not budge. "What?"

"We have much to discuss with the ring and our status as *joint* Masters of Death. You will not be able to remove it." Tom drew the coin out of his pocket. "You were yet to see my memories of Sanguini, but I shall inform you to save us all some time. He was extremely angry when I summoned him. I had to wait of course, to really think of what I could offer. The reason he gave you this, was because he saw your potential in the future...your power and influence."

Hadrian lowered himself in the chair furthest away from Riddle.

"He wanted you, to begin with."

Emerald eyes widened. "Me?"

Tom's lip pulled in the shadow of a sneer. "You are not on the cards to him. Luckily for us, we have other bargaining chips."

Hadrian's stomach plummeted, but he kept his silence. The only thing he could really do was digest what Riddle was talking about and then try and make sense of it later.

"I informed him of your status as a time traveller, and what the future holds for my position. After much negotiating, he and I made a deal that when I become Minister...he shall serve as an open advisor, and that we will pass laws welcoming the vampire community back into the wizarding fold. Slowly, of course. My work with Sanguini has been thorough, and the deal was made after getting to know what his intentions are."

He frowned. "I don't get it. You are powerful enough to do this by yourself. Why include Sanguini?"

Tom's lips quirked at the side. "Firstly, I needed a small army to help our Slytherin's and could not just rely on Aurors to come at the right time. Secondly, I needed someone to get through Grindelwald's protections without notifying him...and vampire's have ways of

apparition that operate on a different level than wizards."

Hadrian raised his hand into his lap, finger touching the warm golden ring. "He gave me this. Why would you give me a Hallow? And this is your family ring...is it a horcrux?" His voice lowered.

He suddenly froze. Memories of his nursery and Voldemort stirred within his thoughts. Sometimes, he used to wake up with the shadow of pain in his limbs and mind, as if the torture had been real. One dream, Voldemort had taken his time in snapping every one of Hadrian's fingers and upon waking, he had been unable to use his hand for a few days.

"Hadrian."

He jumped as a hand appeared in his vision. Hadrian swallowed as he looked up to see Tom standing in front of him. From this close, he could smell Tom's spicy scent, teasing his senses. And he looked devastatingly handsome, with the sharp jawbones and dark eyes. His stomach warmed and his limbs relaxed slightly.

"Tom-"

Tom cut him off as he leant down and captured the hand that the ring was on. He pulled Hadrian to his feet and that their bodies stood plush against each other. But Tom did not release his hand, but drew their joined hands up between their bodies so that he could gaze upon the dark stone.

Hadrian could hardly breathe as he looked up into those cinnamon eyes that he had missed so much. His own eyes drank in the changes in the other male's face. Older...more handsome.

"I need to tell you something, Hadrian. I want you to promise that you will not react in your usual Gryffindor way."

His eyebrows rose. "'Gryffindor' way?"

"I need you to promise," Tom replied, his voice lowering to a husky whisper that made Hadrian's stomach tighten. His lips were close to the raven-haired Slytherin's, breath warm.

"I will do what I can," Hadrian uttered. His veins throbbed with want, at the painfully handsome young man right in front of him. For so long he had dreamt of Tom's face, to the point where it had started to blur the way that memories did. His throat tightened. What could Tom

possibly say to send him away, especially after he had rescued him?

A cool hand closed around his, a thumb stroking over the ring. “I tried to contact you through dreams at the beginning, but there was a block.” He paused. “I believe it was the horcrux.”

“What?” Hadrian answered. “But I did not have the ring at that point.”

“The horcrux you brought back with you, from my future self.” Tom’s eyes bore into his, full of weight.

He blinked and the information slid in. The nursery…his crib…Voldemort. “What? How?” Tom Riddle from the diary had been stuck in the memory that he was created in, in the loop involving setting the basilisk onto the student body. No wonder why his ‘dreams’ involved Voldemort looking as though he was holding onto humanity by a thread. No wonder why they were always trapped in the same house - his parent’s house.

Some of the last words ‘dream’ Voldemort had said to him were: *“I do not belong in this time. You forced us both here and now I have no tether, no purpose but to exist.”*

“It was blocking any contact, and was the initial reason we were able to share some dreams when we were in close proximity but it was not completely connected to me, as I am now. Horcruxes can possess the items in which they are housed.” Tom’s thumb continued its slow caressing of his knuckles. “The Voldemort you knew, could have taken over if he weakened you enough mentally.” He paused again, cinnamon eyes dragging over Hadrian’s face as they burned with some deep emotion. “A human horcrux. I never believed it was possible.”

Hadrian swallowed, unable to think of what he should say. Had Dumbledore known? His visions of Mr Weasley being attacked by Nagini…seeing through Voldemort’s snake’s eyes. The link to Voldemort…it all made sense. Part of him even thought that a tiny part of him suspected. Dumbledore must have known. Was that why the old man had been avoiding him?

“There are only a few ways to get rid of the horcruxes, and all would have left you dead as the vessel. I instead…replaced him.”

Emerald eyes flashed, a frown lining his forehead. “What?” He pulled on his hand, but Tom’s fingers tightened in response.

“The horcrux attached to you would have been weak, especially as he would have never known he had made it. So, I had faith that mine would win in the battle for dominance.”

“The ring? *Faith* ?” His eyes blew wide open. “You could have killed me!”

Tom’s mouth moved closer. “I said not to react in such a Gryffindor way.” Those eyes held his. “It worked. The other option was to give the ‘Voldemort’ that you know, more strength.”

Hadrian tried to keep his mind on the conversation, but Tom’s proximity was distracting. “So…is all this, just the horcruxes?”

“All this?”

He glared, though it was half-hearted. “You know what I mean.”

Tom leant forward and brushed their lips together, Hadrian’s breath hitching at the sensation. “You were special, even before I discovered you housed part of my soul.”

His tongue darted out to wet his lips as Tom drew away a little. “When?”

“I pieced it together through your memories and our interactions.”

“I am not happy about it.” Hadrian drew in a breath. “But, I appreciate your honesty. You could have held this information away from me. I just…need some time to process it. I will have a lot more questions.”

“I do not doubt it.” Tom’s other hand squeezed his upper arm before coming up to brush against his jaw. “There is a slight side-effect, which Sanguini warned about.” He watched avidly as the raven-haired male leaned into his touch. “We achieved magic that is understood by no one. I experimented with absorbing your old horcrux into the new one - possibly two horcruxes in one vessel, which meant that I had to balance it out. Sanguini took some of your blood for the ritual. There is a vampiric blood ritual they use in their culture to bind them together, a type of marriage of sorts. I was able to perform it, with the mental connection we forged…and so part of your soul now resides in me…a horcrux of sorts. I used that connection to locate you, and Grindelwald.”

The mental connection? *“I have been sent to help you. To free you. To*

make you ours…Kiss me, accept me…" They were the words that 'dream' Tom had used right before he had woken in Grindelwald's castle.

"Why? I don't understand," Hadrian asked, his eyes wide and a shudder of fear chasing down his spine.

"The prophecy said it all…you are my equal. We were bound even before all of this. And look what we have become." Tom's eyes gleamed, bringing Hadrian's ring up to brush his lips over the Resurrection Stone. "You are mine."

Words dried up in his mouth as his emotions became a tangled mess. Every day he had thought of Tom, to the point he had questioned many times the depth of his feelings. However, he had always reigned himself in, given that Tom Riddle did not forge connections with anyone else on any deep level. Yet, here he was, confessing that he had merged their souls to save Hadrian. Tom had given a piece of his soul to Hadrian…and absorbed some of his in return. Nonetheless, Tom had gained everything. He had achieved the role of 'hero' and had become the Master of Death.

His eyes pricked with exhausted tears. "Tom…"

"Let me in, Hadrian."

Hadrian melted as lips finally pressed softly against his. His hands - now free - grasped Tom's robes around his hips as he leaned into the kiss. As their mouths fell open, Hadrian moaned as he tasted the sweet ambrosia of the other male. Riddle's tongue danced against his, their kiss growing more desperate.

One of Tom's hands slid down to his hip, eliciting a shudder from the smaller male as he drew their lower bodies closer. Hadrian's hands were free to roam, and all he could do was anchor himself to Riddle, his hands clutching at strong shoulders that were broader than he remembered.

Teeth bit down onto Hadrian's bottom lip. A startled moan filled the small space between them, until Tom's mouth covered his and swallowed the rest of the sound.

"Tom." Emerald eyes fluttered open as he pulled himself away reluctantly. His bottom lip throbbed and his stomach squeezed at the sight of Tom Riddle. The Heir of Slytherin's robes were ruffled, lips reddened from their kisses and those eyes were more crimson than

they were a short while ago.

Hadrian took in a weak breath, trying to reign in his thoughts. “Tom,” he repeated warily, as the taller male moved closer to him again. “We need to talk.” But even he could hear how weak his words and tone were.

Those reddened lips curved upwards in the shadow of a smile, more feral than human. “We will.” Tom cupped his face and lowered his mouth to his ear. “But I want to be buried so deep inside of you, the only words coming out of your mouth is my name...over and over again.”

Hadrian’s mouth fell open a little, a rush of heat chasing down to his groin. He released a choked sound as lips pressed against his ear, then down to his neck. “Riddle,” he gasped, trying to get a grasp on the situation.

Suddenly, he was thrust up against the wall next to the fireplace. It should have hurt, but he detected a cushioning charm right before Riddle’s mouth crashed onto his. This wasn’t slow like their last one, this was consuming and bone-deep.

Tom grabbed his hands, pinning them above his lover’s head - just like their first intimate encounter before Hadrian had been taken. He swallowed Hadrian’s cry before pulling back. “Do you want this, Hadrian?” he breathed. “If you do, you will be mine forever. There will be no one else.”

As he looked up, his eyes flicked across the handsome planes of the Slytherin’s face. This was an older version of the Tom he knew from school, from the diary horcrux. However, he was stronger than the Voldemort that Hadrian had fought time and time again. The Master of Death. Defeater of Grindelwald. The memory he had revealed to Hadrian revealed a Tom Riddle that still *Crucio-ed* people to get what he wanted. However, Tom had fought Grindelwald to get him back. They housed each other’s souls. Never had anyone affected him in the way that the other Slytherin had.

Ginny had been a passing interest, but never ignited the fire within him that Tom did. Would anyone? There was Cassius, but he was safe.

“I’m afraid,” Hadrian admitted.

“Afraid?”

“Of the future. What this means.”

“We are the future.”

“That is what scares me.” He gazed into those cinnamon eyes.

“I will not become the monster you knew, Hadrian. You will always ensure that.”

Hadrian drew in a deep breath, trying to calm the thundering of his heart. “I want this…you. I want you, Tom.”

Chapter 36

Chapter Notes

> I am so sorry for the long wait! I hope it is worth it. Life got a bit more tricky under the current climate.
>
> Enjoy!

Tom's mouth covered his as hands moved down to cup Hadrian's backside. In one smooth movement, he lifted the raven-haired man so that Hadrian had to wrap his legs around Riddle's waist.

As Tom drew back, he maneuvered them into another room - a bedroom. He strode over to the bed, depositing Hadrian onto the sheets. They were luxurious, much nicer than the ones in the Slytherin common room or even at Numengard - thick, plump and shimmering with gold thread. Hadrian looked up from where he sat on the side of the bed, watching with bated breath as Tom closed the bedroom door and turned towards him.

The man was beautiful. Hadrian had been doomed the moment he met Tom Riddle. Charismatic, attractive, powerful...everyone around him was drawn into his web. How could he have ever ended up anywhere else but here? His heart thundered in his chest, making his bones ache.

"Strip."

His throat became dry instantly, as a rush of arousal shot through him. Hadrian swallowed, reaching for the button at his neck of his clothing. It suddenly was the most unsexy clothing he could ever think of, and a rush of embarrassment drew further colour to his cheeks. His fingers trembled at the button, but as he met Riddle's eyes, confidence rushed up again. Those cinnamon-crimson eyes were alight with desire, watching him with avid fascination.

They were joined...in souls.

Did the prophecy mean this? Was this how it was always meant to be?

Hadrian swallowed, twisting the hole so the button popped out. He reached down and released the last few buttons. It took a moment for him to regain his composure before shrugging off the material and the

cloak.

“Beautiful,” Riddle breathed. He strode over, fully clothed still, and dusted his fingers over Hadrian’s collarbone. “Lay down.”

The raven-haired male shifted up the bed so that his head was on the pillows, propped up so he could see Tom. His chest ached, and he longed to cover his body with the thick duvet. However, the heated look he received from his lover drew all of his attention back to Tom instead.

Riddle was starting to undress himself, removing his school robes first. Every movement revealed more pale skin, until he was standing naked before Hadrian, his large arousal jutting from his body. Those lips were pulled to the side in an arrogant smirk, before he stalked over to the bed, climbing on top to move over Hadrian’s body.

He was the predator, and Hadrian was very much in the role of the prey.

A deep, sharp intake of breath sounded from Hadrian’s mouth at the feeling of Tom’s cool skin against his. His emerald eyes were wide as he stared up into cinnamon. However, before he could say anything, Tom’s mouth seized his in a passionate kiss. His body rested on top of Hadrian’s, pressing their erections together in a single movement.

Both males groaned into each other’s mouths.

Tom bit down on Hadrian’s lip, turning his groan into a whimper before he sucked the abused flesh into his mouth to soothe it. His hand slid up Hadrian’s leg, squeezing his hip as he rhythmically pressed his hips into his smaller lover’s.

Throwing his head back into the depths of the pillow, Hadrian gasped as Tom’s length slid along his. “Tom,” he breathed, finding the sensation almost too much as he turned his head to the side.

The other male used the opportunity to kiss down the column of Hadrian’s neck, sucking and biting at the flesh as he travelled down.

“Wait.” Hadrian’s hand came up between their bodies, pressing against Tom’s chest.

Tom drew back slowly.

“I’ve never...you know.” Hadrian blushed, shrugging his shoulders

when the words escaped him. Tom's usually perfect hair hung, loose over his forehead, with the slight curl to the dark tresses. There were pinpricks of colour on his high cheekbones. How many times had he fantasised about Tom in this way during the cold and lonely nights at Numengard? How many times had he replayed the incident in the cupboard, where Tom was so *commanding*?

"I will take care of you." There was almost a softness to the husky voice that responded.

"I know," Hadrian replied, and meant every word.

Tom kissed him ravenously, like he wanted to devour him whole and leave nothing left for anyone else. It was a hunger reflected in the smaller man, whose hands buried into black hair to anchor them together.

His hand drifted down, to skim along Hadrian's erection. The smaller male cried out, bucking his hips upwards to try and get more friction. He was rewarded by Tom's hand curling around his length, pumping slowly once - twice before moving away.

Watching behind half-closed lids, Hadrian watched as Tom sat up. His body was lean with strong shoulders and narrow hips. Unmarred. Perfect. His hands rose to touch, but stopped when Tom gave him a pointed look.

"I was serious when I said I want to be buried inside you," Tom commented, leaning over to the bedside table, where he opened the drawer.

Hadrian's tongue swept across his swollen bottom lip, a pulse of desire running through him at the view of Tom's slim backside and unblemished back.

Tom pulled out a small vial before returning his attention to Hadrian. "So many nights I have dreamt about having you here, like this." His hand returned to his lover's cock, coaxing a moan of approval from Hadrian as he steadily moved his hand. "My soul is already deep, so very deep inside you," he murmured, voice husky as his eyes grew darker.

He twisted his hand, drawing a longer and sharper cry from Hadrian.

"Turn around."

Hadrian swallowed, disappointed that the hand around his erection was stopping but he obediently turned so that he was on his stomach. Now he could not see Tom, he was hyper-aware of his touch. Fingers travelled down his spine, eliciting a shudder from him until they reached his behind.

Cool hands spread his legs, causing heat to rush up to his cheeks, knowing he was exposed in the most intimate way. Tom pulled Hadrian's hips up, peppering kisses across the small of his back to soothe him.

"Touch yourself."

Cheeks reddening, Hadrian moved one of his trembling hands to himself, barely catching the moan in his throat before it escape. His mouth caught in the sheets and he maneuvered his neck so that he could breathe. By doing so, he caught sight of Tom dousing his fingers in slippery fluid from the vial.

"Good."

As the word slipped from his lover's mouth, he felt a small nudge to his entrance and he stiffened.

"*Relax*," Tom hissed.

Hadrian tugged on his erection, gasping at the tone of Tom's voice. As his shoulders relaxed, he felt a finger slide into him. He bit his bottom lip at the strange sensation, feeling it wriggle for long moments until there was more pressure and a second digit slipped in next. This one had a slight burn and sting that disappeared quickly. Hadrian had no doubt that the lube was helping.

A strong hand took his hip. The fingers slid in deeper, eliciting a groan from both of the men. Hadrian jolted as those fingers curved inside of him and brushed against something else. At the strangled noise from the smaller male, Tom chuckled, aiming for the same spot.

With the combination of his hand, and the relentless attention to his prostate - the release hit him hard. Hadrian cried out, spilling onto the sheets below. His eyes squeezed tight as he panted into the pillow, his body shaking from the strength of the orgasm. When his senses began to return, Hadrian whimpered at the tightness and fullness of his entrance. There were three fingers pumping steadily, taking care to avoid his prostate.

Tom heard his discomfort and his fingers stilled. “You are beautiful… all spread out for me. So tight.” He pressed a kiss right above Hadrian’s entrance. “I want want to fuck you until you scream my name, and everyone knows who you belong to.”

A part of Hadrian wanted to see that. He wanted to see and *feel* Tom lose control. A groan slipped from his mouth at the vivid mental image, his cock stirring again.

Tom chuckled.

His fingers slipped out and a few seconds later, Hadrian felt something blunt and large sliding against his entrance. His fingers grasped the pillow underneath him. Once, he had heard a couple of boys in the Gryffindor bathrooms whispering about how much they had heard it hurt...that they could not imagine anyone doing it.

A hand slid down his side, to settle on his hip. “Hadrian, relax. Touch yourself for me.”

Hadrian swallowed, palming his now half-erect cock, which had recovered somewhat from his previous orgasm. A shudder chased down his spine.

Tom squeezed his hip before pulling him to the side.

“Tom?” Hadrian allowed his lover to maneuver him away from the pillows, eyes widening when he spotted the mirror hanging on the wall. He was on his hands and knees, cheeks flushed with colour, hair mussed. And Tom… Tom was magnificent, positioned behind him, cinnamon eyes capturing his in the reflection. A smirk quirked the side of those full lips, eyes glimmering with want.

“I want you to watch us,” Tom said. He pressed a palm to Hadrian’s shoulder blades, pressing him down a little, so that his backside was in the air...exposed.

Hadrian bit his lip. It was easier to balance, his elbow supporting his weight as his other hand handled his erection. He had to thank Merlin for his youth and quick recovery time. Suddenly, Tom pressed in slowly.

It hurt.

Releasing a pained noise, Hadrian’s hand stilled, other hand gripping the covers until his knuckles were white. “Tom…” he gasped, tears

pricking his eyes.

Hands rested on his hips, gently squeezing. “Look at us…relax.”

Emerald green eyes rose and despite the pain, a shock of pleasure zipped through him. Tom’s hair was ruffled, cheeks dotted with pink as he held himself still. He was *inside* him. He made another low noise as Tom sunk in further. It hurt but Hadrian was transfixed by the myriad of emotions he could see flitting across the other male’s face.

Eventually, it stopped. Tom bottomed out, hands flexing around Hadrian’s sides. He met the other male’s wide eyes in the mirror.

He felt full, the pain dissipating rapidly as Hadrian shifted. “Please…Tom,” he breathed.

Tom slowly pulled out before slamming back in. Hadrian cried out his hand gripping his erection that stirred back to life.

“Hadrian…”

Green eyes flew open and a choked scream fell from his mouth as Tom brushed something inside of him. That same place as before… He barely heard the dark chuckle behind him as Tom aimed for that spot with every thrust, reducing Hadrian to a babbling wreck.

He gasped as a hand grabbed his hair, pulling his head up. As soon as he looked in the mirror, he knew it was over. Tom’s pale hand fisted his raven hair as he pounded into Hadrian from behind.

“Tom, Tom…please,” he chanted. “I-”

A particularly brutal thrust to his prostate sent him over the edge. Hadrian screamed as he came. His magic whipped up inside him at the release, causing his orgasm to stretch on. Part of him was aware of a groan behind him, hips pressed against his backside.

Magic danced between them, making both of them gasp at the sensation before they felt something snap closed inside them.

Hadrian managed to raise his face from where it had planted into the covers, to see a golden web shimmering between them, connecting them.

“What-” he breathed between pants.

Tom was still buried inside of him, a hand drifting through the

intricate web of vibrating threads. “I think this is a bond.” The golden shimmered once more before sinking into their flesh and disappearing.

“Bond?” Hadrian asked sleepily.

Tom hummed, withdrawing from his tired lover. Hadrian groaned a little at the sensation, especially at the wetness he felt trickling down his thigh. He slumped onto the bed, feeling sated but achy. Aware that Tom had moved off the bed, Hadrian closed his eyes and drifted off to sleep.

*

There were fingermark bruises on his hips that he prodded gently. They could be healed but Hadrian quite liked the visual reminder of their earlier activities. Tom had woken him not long after he had fallen asleep, having cleaned him up, to administer a potion to his entrance to help with any soreness.

It was weird, but nice to see Tom looking after him. Clearly, neither of them had expected whatever had happened between them - the golden bond - but Hadrian was finding that he should just expect the unexpected in their relationship. *Relationship.* That was a word that still felt strange. After so much time away from Tom, he had been fully prepared for their reunion to be very neutral and one-sided.

Now they both shared souls, a deeper connection than what anyone could share.

Hadrian wiped away the condensation on the mirror, staring at his reflection. Briefly, Grindelwald flitted through his mind - neck spilling open as the blade sunk in. It was over. He tore himself away and padded back into the bedroom.

It was dark now, candles casting a light glow around the room. The curtains had been drawn. Hadrian dried himself and changed into the pyjamas that had been left on the bed for him before walking into the living area.

Tom was reading (of course) by the fire.

Hadrian's breath caught at how handsome the other male was. It was so clear how the young male managed to bewitch everyone around him - sexy, intelligent and charming. And he was *his*.

"Hadrian, come here," Tom commanded softly, gesturing to the floor in front of him.

A frown crossed his face even as a pillow appeared at Tom's feet. Even so, maybe it was the sex, but he felt more amendable than usual and sat down. A hand threaded through his hair instantly, massaging his scalp as Hadrian rested his head on the other male's lap.

"How are you feeling?"

"Strange." Hadrian stared into the fire. "It is strange being back here...part of me thought it would never happen. I feel like I am just going to wake up again back in Nurmengard."

"Understandable, though that feeling will disappear in time." Tom closed his book, the hand leaving his hair. However, before Hadrian could protest, those cool fingers took his chin and raised his face so he looked at him. "Whilst you were bathing, I researched the phenomenon that occurred between us. It appears we bonded...fully. It makes sense, with our joint magic through our brother wands and our horcruxes with each other, really. Magic has an odd way of working."

"What does that mean?"

"The blood ritual I used, utilised the horcrux you had inside you, which had formed the delicate mental connection we had before you were captured. I have managed to half-convince the Minister and Headmaster that we managed to do all of this so far with the power of brother wands. However, earlier, it appears that we had some unfinished business with magic...and it bound us. Stronger than Muggle marriage."

"I don't really know anything about bonding." Had his parents bonded?

Tom smiled, his thumb sweeping over Hadrian's cheek. "Instead of marrying like Muggles, wizards bond, usually with a ceremony and guests. It requires a ritual."

"So, how did we bond without a ritual?" Hadrian froze as soon as the words left his mouth. He felt the floor pulse beneath him, and a familiar beat of magic. "Hogwarts?"

“It appears so.”

“So, she took me here…and has bound us?” Hadrian glowered. “The castle has no concept of consent.”

“Regardless, this protects us,” Tom replied. “A bond cannot be traced to when and where or how it was formed. It would explain our joint magic and ability for me to find you, without people knowing the truth about our souls.”

“So…marriage?” His cheeks flushed. “At eighteen?”

Riddle smirked. “It is not like we have overzealous parents to tell us off, or the risk of children.”

“No! Be quiet, she will hear!” Hadrian’s green eyes were wide. He had a horrible image of him with a large stomach with Tom behind, hugging him.

“I guess if she can transport you in time, she could do anything,” Riddle mused. “A very interesting image you had in your mind just then, Hadrian.”

“I don’t even want kids,” he grumbled in response. “This…is weird. Maybe I really will wake up.”

Tom bent down, pressing a kiss to Hadrian’s forehead. “Because you are bonded to the man who kills your parents?”

That ended in a glare shot his way. “Oh shut up, Tom. You are not the man who kills them…plus they will never exist now. Grindelwald made sure of that.”

“You were magnificent in your execution.” There was a hunger in the depths of those cinnamon eyes. “I have that memory of you slicing Grindelwald’s neck stored in a vial, ready for when I want to relive it again through the pensive. You were perfect in your revenge.”

Hadrian rolled his eyes. “Only you would find me killing someone, sexual.”

“Speaking of sex, how are you feeling?”

“Fine. A bit achy still but it is going.” His face flamed again, mind transporting back to that image of both of them in the mirror…of Tom behind him as he thrust deep…

“I propose we do not leave here tomorrow. I want to map out every part of your body, until you can’t walk anymore…even with healing potions,” Riddle murmured, drawing Hadrian up into a kiss. “You are mine,” he said against Hadrian’s lips as they parted.

“You are mine, as well,” Hadrian replied defiantly.

Tom hummed, eyes glinting. “So it would seem.” He paused. “There is something pressing that I want to know. Why the Deathly Hallows? They seem very dark for someone who was once Dumbledore’s right hand man.”

Hadrian stiffened. When he was in Nurmengard, he had been so scared about Death appearing, of that cold iciness that descends before the appearance of the hooded creature. So he opened his mind and let Tom in. It was easier than before, a slight slip - no need for any spells. But he knew that Riddle would understand, because his greatest fear was also Death. There was comfort in that.

Chapter 37

Chapter Notes

> Please read the comment at the bottom for the future of the story! And thank you for all the wonderful comments and kudos!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Days had passed.

There had been so many meetings in the Headteacher's Office, sometimes with the Minister himself present. Tom and Hadrian had been confined to their rooms, especially when Tom had announced that they were in fact bonded after Dippet had told them they were to move back to the dormitories shortly.

That had caused an explosion.

Both had watched in humour as the Minister had groaned into the face that was plastered over his face, and Dumbledore had blanched with horror. Dippet, however, appeared resigned to the fate that anything was on the table when these two were involved.

Everything was a media nightmare. *Everyone* wanted to speak to the two Hogwarts students who took down a Dark Lord. The Minister had battled everything on the Law front, personally seeing to all of the issues surrounding Hadrian. He was classed as a hero, like Tom. Though, he knew they all suspected who he was during his time with Grindelwald. Dumbledore especially. He was the one who had pressed the issue numerous times.

Grindelwald's assassin. The guy in the green mask.

Tom knew. Tom had seen.

Hadrian had only been to a month worth of rallies and yet, his reputation was solid. At Grindelwald's command he had sought after those who defied the man's words in the open forum, making sure they never did so again. The Dark Lord had preferred Hadrian at his side, which meant that his executions or torture were usually performed from a distance, revealing the strength and potency of his magic.

Tom had also felt how much he had enjoyed it.

The Minister had insisted that both of them sign the bonding registry and that in payment for all of the hard work and sleepless nights he had, they were to attend the Ministry's Celebratory Ball. There, they were to be awarded the Order of Merlin- First Class and for the public announcement of their bonding.

But now, it was time for reintegration.

Hadrian wiped his sweaty palms on his trousers as he stared at the mirror. He frowned at the purple marks across his neck, one with particularly vivid teeth marks embedded. Pressing a hand to one, he hissed at the pain that bloomed under his fingers.

"Don't you dare heal them." Tom appeared in the reflection behind him, adjusting his Head Boy badge that he had been awarded this academic year.

"I look like a vampire's whore."

"You weren't complaining when I gave them to you." Tom strode over, hands sliding down to his lover's hips as he pressed a kiss to one of the partially-healed marks.

Hadrian hissed pulling away. "You are evil."

"Future Dark Lord."

His lips twitched at the side as he fought the urge to roll his eyes. Hadrian turned, trying to control how much his stomach was twisting and flipping. The Future. That was one subject both of them had avoided speaking about. Everything was different now. This was his present and none of the future could be predicted anymore. Dumbledore was no longer the saviour of the wizarding world. Hadrian's father would never be born. His mother might...Lily Evans could still live, but she would never give birth to Harry Potter. Harry Potter was well and truly dead.

Cool fingers slid under his chin, lifting his face up. "We face this, and we will own this."

We . Hadrian nodded, leaning into the touch. "I know."

They finally left their rooms. Tom engaged him in general conversation about how boring Binn's lessons had been, drawing Hadrian's mind away as he recounted one time Silas had been so bored and stressed over NEWTS he had fallen asleep and fallen over

backwards onto the floor during lesson time. And not once did Binns stop his monologue, even when the class was in fits of giggles.

It was the smell of pumpkin juice and gravy that made Hadrian stop, just before the Entrance Hall, where he knew the doors would be open to the Great Hall. Everything smelt so normal, and so much like home.

“I dreamt about this so much,” he uttered, blinking away the sting in his eyes.

A cool hand took his and squeezed gently. No words were needed.

Hadrian finally plucked up the courage and they both strode forward, but Tom did not let go of his hand. The action made him feel warm inside, momentarily forgetting what was about to happen.

The Great Hall exploded.

He blinked, frozen in the doorway as every single student and staff member got to their feet and clapped. It was a thunderous applause, large groups of students whooping and cheering. Hadrian could not stop the smile and his head shaking at the bunch of crying Hufflepuff girls waving at them. *God, he had even missed them* .

Tom pulled him gently over to the Slytherin table. As typical, all of them were very polite in their clapping, but what was unusual was the *emotion* . Pride. Respect. Adoration.

Their friends were there. The same friends that had followed Tom to train a gruelling regime after their taxing NEWT lessons. The same friends that had stormed a Dark Lord’s base in the middle of nowhere to rescue him.

Hadrian broke out into a grin as Abraxas held out a hand, a massive smile on Malfoy’s face. He tugged free from Tom’s hand and hugged the blonde. Abraxas made a startled sound before awkwardly patting a hand on Hadrian’s back.

“It is good to see you,” Malfoy breathed in his ear.

“You too.” When he drew away, his hug had melted the Slytherins and each of them greeted Hadrian warmly. Adelia, Druella and Sylvia all hugged him tight, as if afraid he would just vanish again.

Cassius was last, hanging behind and looking tired. Hadrian did not

speak, just embraced him tightly for long moments before drawing away.

“Welcome home,” Cassius said.

Hadrian smiled before returning to Tom, who was observing with a carefully schooled neutral expression. He took his lover’s hand as they sat down, the Slytherin’s shifting up to accommodate the couple.

A ringing sounded from the Head Table, with Dippet rising to his feet. The man ran a hand over his beard wearily, though he had a slight smile at his face. Eventually, everyone started to die down, although a buzz remained.

Emerald green eyes scanned the table, drinking in the sight of all his Housemates and the sight of the packed benches. Dinner with Grindelwald was always either a silent affair or some kind of debate about duelling. Hogwarts was always going to be home. He had never had anywhere else.

“Good evening.” Dippet had taken his place at the owl lectern. “At Hogwarts, we pride ourselves on looking after each other and within this castle, we become a family. The Founders of this great school constructed this place to educate wizarding youth, to ensure that you receive not just the best education but that you leave with friends you need for life. Our wizarding community is small. That is why it is so important to forge bonds that can stand the test of time and hardship.” He paused, eyes rising to the student body who had fallen completely silent. “A few of our students tested those very bonds, even when that meant putting themselves in mortal danger. Tonight we welcome Hadrian Peverell back into our student body.”

Tom’s thumb swept over the back of his hand, pulling a smile onto his face.

“When Hadrian was taken by Gellert Grindelwald over a year ago, there was one House that felt his loss more than any, despite his short time here at Hogwarts. I can confirm to you this evening, what transpired in the downfall of the Dark Lord who took so much from all of us - our freedom, our families and our safety. On the evening of the 25th of February, our Head Boy Thomas Riddle, with a group of Slytherins infiltrated Gellert Grindelwald’s base - joined by a group of Aurors when the Minister was made aware of the situation. In the rescue of Mr Peverell, Grindelwald fell at the hands of both Hadrian and Thomas. Both will receive a First Class Order of Merlin for the

defeat of the wizard who terrorised the world."

Applause broke out again. Hadrian swallowed, his smile slipping from his face. He had never been good with this: public celebration. Killing Dark Lords seemed to be his destiny. When had killing ever been so welcomed? He had always wondered that in the timeline he had come from. Why did people just expect a child to kill? Why had Dumbledore?

His prophesied destiny had been to kill Tom...now his bond mate.

"Joining them, awarded the Second Class Order of Merlin are: Abraxas Malfoy, Antonin Dolohov, Dorian Mulciber, Elias Nott, Silas Lestrange, Cassius Avery, Adelia Greengrass, Druella Lazenby and Sylvia Selwyn."

They had all come. Risked themselves. Hadrian stared at the flagstone floor, willing himself not to give into the emotions that were stirring inside of him. It just wasn't Slytherin to show *that* much emotion.

He barely noted the stamping of feet from the other Houses and the thunderous clapping. In fact, the rest of Dippet's speech was lost as Hadrian reflected upon just how much had gone on. There was a risk he would never see Ron and Hermione again, that they would never even come to existence. Everyone in the future he knew was at risk. However, in travelling back here, he had found Tom.

Tom.

Hadrian turned around on the bench to look at Tom. Cinnamon eyes met his immediately as if they were two magnets drawn to each other. They always had been. Regardless of time, they were always going to be pulled towards one another. Tom Riddle with his perfectly coiffed hair and his devastatingly handsome face.

"*Are you all right*?"

"*This is a lot.*"

"*We can go...I am sure that I can take your mind off this*."

Hadrian shot his lover a dark look, but there was no fire in it. The only fire was pooling in his gut at the promise in those words. His brain hotwired over to this morning, where he had been pinned against the shower wall as Tom sucked him off.

A minute or so later, Dippet had finished and dinner resumed. Hadrian took a glass of pumpkin juice from Abraxas, who sat next to him, before sliding some meat and vegetables onto his plate.

“How does it feel being the saviours of the wizarding world?” Dolohov grinned.

Everyone shot Antonin exasperated looks.

“What?” the seventh year said, plucking a bread roll from the basket.

“You have no decorum,” Druella drawled.

Dolohov’s face flushed before he grumbled into his tea.

“I haven’t managed to thank you all yet,” Hadrian said lightly, pushing a pea around the side of his plate. “Thank you.”

“It was fun,” Lestrange grinned. “I had to tone down my spells once the Aurors turned up though, such a shame.”

Hadrian could only imagine.

“It was exciting,” Adelia breathed, leaning against Cassius who looked flushed at the contact.

The Slytherins laughed, exchanging hushed conversations over some of the spells they had gotten to use in Nurmengard.

Hadrian laughed along with them, taking a few mental notes on what spells he also wanted to try out as he finished his dinner. Tom had been very busy with training them up. They would probably even surpass their future selves at this moment, with the strength and imagination they had demonstrating. Riddle had even taken them into the Chamber.

When Abraxas shed his outer robe and leant over to take the vat of tea, Hadrian froze, eyes fixed on the crisp white sleeve that pressed against skin. It was pulled taut against a black mark, a tattoo. A skull, with what looked like a snake coming out of its mouth.

His head whipped to Tom. “*Why have they got the Dark Mark?*”

A dark eyebrow rose at him. “*It was the best way to summon them to me at Nurmengard, considering a lot of them did not have the power to breach the wards that I have. The design was something I came across in the Chamber, as well as what I saw in your memories. It seemed somehow*

fitting."

"*Fitting? What if they are discovered?*"

Tom smiled, though there was a tinge of impatience. He pressed a finger under Hadrian's chin, lifting it to fully face him. "*We are the heroes now, Hadrian*," he purred. "*They will not be discovered.*"

"*You have made Death Eaters, despite you seeing my memories?"*

The group of Slytherins were half watching the angry exchange, and half trying to cover up that there was a heated moment going on by chatting amongst themselves.

"Finish your dessert, Hadrian," Tom commanded, releasing his chin. He pushed a treacle tart towards him.

"Bastard," he muttered, picking up his fork and scooping some of the sweet goodness into his mouth. What had he expected? Had he expected Tom to be Light? No, no he hadn't but the Dark Mark lit fear within him.

"Hadrian and I are bonded."

He choked on a bit of pastry at the matter-of-fact statement that Tom just announced to the group.

There was a round of 'congratulations' from the friends, with knowing looks passed between some of them. Even Hadrian's ears were hot.

"I hope you will address him in the manner of someone in his position."

Hadrian frowned as he finished off the last bit of his treacle tart, finding it difficult to get down his tight throat. He felt relieved when some students started to leave, and got to his feet. Tom stood with him and they both said their goodbyes to the Slytherins.

It was a silent walk to their rooms, where they avoided all of the other students. Hadrian had led them to a portrait that would take them to their floor and personal rooms. He stomped into their living room, and when the portrait slid closed behind them, he whirled around.

"You should have told me!"

"It really has no relevance," Tom replied smoothly, taking off his Slytherin robe. Cinnamon eyes trained on his furious lover, watching.

“It is the Dark Mark!”

“We have already gone over this.”

“Not in enough detail!” he hissed. “What were you thinking? You know what it means to me.” Emerald eyes grew wide as Tom stalked over. Hadrian had unconsciously backed away, his spine hitting the wall. He swallowed as hands came down either side of his head, trapping him there.

“I do.” Riddle’s lips hovered over his. “We did a lot of work to get you back, Hadrian. So many nights spent going over plans, learning new spells and securing our future. You know longer know what the future looks like. But I do.”

“And what is that, Riddle?”

Tom smiled, but it was sharp at the sides, razor sharp. “You don’t need to worry, darling, Voldemort will never exist. I *am* the next Dark Lord, but I have you at my side, don’t I?”

“What does that mean?” Hadrian replied hoarsely, feeling their magic dance between them, electrifying his nerves. The velvety tone of his lover’s voice made every single word a caress to his already ragged senses.

“I will be Minister. We will protect the wizarding world from the growing Muggle influence…but you will keep me in check, won’t you?”

Hadrian’s breath caught, seeing the crimson glint in Tom’s eyes. *His* Tom’s eyes. Tom: the man who had introduced him to the old art of Ritual magic, who had bargained with Hadrian with the horcruxes, who had challenged his very ideals…and shared his very soul with him to save him from Grindelwald. This Tom, was not the broken man that he had envisioned, or had seen as Voldemort.

“I will keep you in check”

“Is that a promise?”

“Maybe a threat?” Hadrian grinned.

Tom chuckled, a dark and deep sound before he seized his smaller lover into a deep kiss. Magic flitted over their skin, joint souls burning.

*

It was ridiculous in its extravagance. Would the Ministry have thrown a party like this if he had killed Voldemort? Certainly, it would have never been held at the Malfoy's. It was strange to think that such happiness was born from death itself. They were celebrating two Hogwarts students having killed a man, albeit a man who had terrorised Europe.

Hadrian stood on the balcony and overlooked Malfoy Manor's grounds. It was his first time seeing the building with its land and it was beautiful. The peacocks were even white - like Abraxas' hair - and strutted amongst the guests who chatted and preened around each other. Sometimes it was difficult to make out the wizards from the animals.

Emerald eyes fixed onto Tom - how could his eyes ever leave? Like moths to a burning flame, people circled around him, trying to get close. But there was no getting close to Tom Riddle. Not unless your name was Hadrian Peverell. No, he charmed everyone at an arm's length and kept them there. Tom was an expert, a charmer, a Slytherin through and through. Lucifer himself, the face of an angel and the warped soul underneath the fleshy layers of his human suit. Part of that soul resided within Hadrian now, just as part of Hadrian was nestled right next to that warped, dark soul inside Tom.

A hand pressed to his chest, as if he could feel it.

"Not joining the festivities, Mr Peverell?"

Hadrian's lips curved, hands tightening a little on the stone balcony. "Neither are you, Professor Dumbledore."

There was a flash of cerulean blue in his peripheral vision as the light wizards came to stand next to him. Slightly wrinkled hands mirrored the student's, laying on the smooth sandstone. "A strange affair, is it not? Such joy from death; a strange juxtaposition indeed."

"Someone once said to me that 'death is but the next great adventure'."

"A wise person indeed."

Hadrian smiled and hummed. Those were the words spoken to him, after the whole debacle with the Philosopher's Stone. Nicholas Flamel would still be alive - having brewed the Elixir of Life from the Stone. Six hundred years old, more or less. As Masters of Death, how long would they live for? That, paired with the horcruxes…

"You are quite an enigma, Mr Peverell." Dumbledore looked up at the moon, the white light bleaching his still-auburn hair, making him appear much older. Like the Dumbledore he used to know. "Enough to stir the interest of two Dark wizards. It makes me wonder what the appeal is. Powerful…yes, but many are powerful."

"Are you accusing Tom of being Dark, Professor?" Hadrian gave the man a quick side-along glance, the smile still on his lips. "Tom Riddle is a hero."

There was not a trace of humour on Dumbledore's face. "Perhaps he is not the one that I should have been watching."

Releasing a small chuckle, Hadrian rolled back onto the balls of his feet. "I have no doubt you were watching, Professor."

The older wizard sighed. "The future is a fickle thing. I wonder what it has in store for us."

"It is what we make it to be." Hadrian looked at his old Headmaster. "Things are not always so black and white, Professor Dumbledore. Often, that is where we go wrong." He went to leave the balcony.

"We never caught the man in the green mask. The one Gellert kept close."

Hadrian stared down the hallway. "No, you didn't." With those words, he strode away, his hands clenching at his sides. He needed to get away from Dumbledore to save his own sanity. It was difficult to listen to someone who claimed to be Light, and yet used Hadrian like a puppet.

In a few months time, he would be away from Dumbledore's eyes. Just a few months. Dippet and the Minister had offered for him to stagger his NEWT exams, but he did not want to prolong the process. He did not want to say, but Grindelwald had forced him to study until he utterly cracked…studying even when the man was not telling him to. The library and Nurmungard was extensive. Anything he did not know, Tom was filling in.

A few months and...the unknown. Hadrian had lots of offers...lots, for employment and apprenticeships but he had no idea what he wanted to do. His expertise was killing or seriously maiming. How many had been victim to the blades he had carried as Grindelwald's protector or the magic that he wielded, under the *restringo* band that the Lord had made him wear? The Minister must know, or have an inkling that Hadrian was the man in the green mask, but how could he prove it? How could he actively go against someone that the public deemed a 'saviour'?

Ron and Hermione would be utterly disgusted and disappointed in who he had turned out to be. Tom Riddle's bondmate, a killer…

Hadrian's heart clenched a little at the thought of his long-lost friends. He was starting to forget the sound of their voices, memories fading like they were no longer his.

"Hadrian?"

He blinked, realising he was standing in another hallway on the ground floor, near some double doors that would lead outside. The gossamer curtains ruffled in the wind.

"Hadrian?"

A hand landed on his shoulder. He startled, blinking again to refocus his vision on Cassius. Hadrian gave a warm smile. "Sorry, Cass."

"You were gone for a while," his friend said, voice quiet and dark blue eyes searching. The hand on Hadrian's shoulder squeezed a little, in a reassuring gesture, but did not leave.

Cassius...the same boy who had climbed into his bed and hugged him after his argument with Dippet. He could have easily fallen in love with the sandy haired, beautiful young man in front of him. The boy had even taken him to Madame Puddifoot's for a cake and 'getting to know you' session.

"I ran into Dumbledore," he answered.

Cassius smiled. "Don't tell Tom that."

Hadrian shook his head. "Wouldn't dare."

"Do you want a walk?"

He nodded, feeling Cassius' hand slip from his shoulder. "As long as it isn't around people. I have no idea how Tom does what he does out there."

The other Slytherin laughed, leading him out of the doorway and down a little side-path that led in the opposite direction to the party. Music - violins - floated along the breeze along with general chatter and laughter.

Malfoy Manor's gardens were just beautiful. They passed a perfectly manicured series of bushes, with not one leaf growing out of place. A couple of white peacocks strutted between them, cooing to each other.

"Are you happy?"

He glanced at Cassius, who walked by his side down the shingled path. "Why do you ask?"

"As your friend, your happiness is my business. We - I missed you when you were gone." Cassius stopped and his head angled up towards the moon. "It's funny, isn't it? That you appear out of nowhere, and in the space of a few months, you have a whole group of us training to fight a Dark Lord to get you back. And we wouldn't have it any other way."

Hadrian's throat tightened, finding it difficult to swallow or even form words.

"I would have treasured you beyond anything, but I could never give what Tom and you have." Cassius smiled at him, eyes gleaming. "I love dark magic, Hadrian, but it can be a slippery slope into madness and self-destruction if one is not careful enough. You came and challenged us, challenged Tom. You two share something that no one else could ever dare to match. In doing so, I think you saved us all."

Emerald eyes averted, finding the ground very interesting. "I don't know what to say, Cassius."

A warm hand took his, gently squeezing. "You don't have to say anything. You have my support. Although I cannot be a lover, I would take you as my brother."

Hadrian's eyes grew hot as he raised them. Cassius was just so beautiful, bathed in moonlight with his sandy-blonde hair and classically handsome face. "Thank you."

“And you owe me a whole year’s worth of Quidditch matches.”

His grinned, whacking Cassius’ arm playfully. “You brute.”

“Hey, I infiltrated Grindelwald’s mountain-fort for you.”

“Yeah, and you got a nice medal for it.”

Both friends laughed, heading back to the fray of guests that were socialising together. They discussed the changes in the Quidditch teams, debating who was going to make the cut for the World Cup, until they saw someone heading towards them.

Hadrian could feel him before he saw him; a tug on his soul, as if striving for its other half. They were bonded. They shared souls - part of Tom resided in Hadrian, replacing the horcrux that had tortured him relentlessly. Part of Hadrian lived on in Tom, in some elaborate horcrux that even he could not quite get his mind around. Both had survived a vampiric bonding ritual, which no documented wizard seemed to have ever attempted.

It wasn’t the blast of burning pain across his scar that had threatened his mental stability, with Voldemort. No, this was a pleasant burn that started in his scar and enveloped his body.

He turned, just as Tom was nearing, giving his lover a warm smile. “Tom,” he breathed, leaning into the hand that came to cup his jaw.

“My Lord,” Cassius said quietly, bending slightly at the waist.

Hadrian tried to ignore it. They had argued a couple of days ago after lessons about the way the Slytherins greeted both Tom *and* himself. Tom had not budged on the matter, but Hadrian outright refused to answer to anyone who called him by that greeting.

“*You disappeared for a while*.”

Hadrian shuddered at the thumb that swept along his cheek before the hand withdrew. “*I hate these things.*”

“*I know you do, darling*,” Tom replied. He offered an arm. “*I promise to make it up to you later*.”

“*You better*,” Hadrian grumbled, taking the arm.

Cassius excused himself, returning to the plethora of guests.

"*The Minister has approached me informally. He wants me to take the Gaunt Lordship, as I remain the last of the family line, as well as my family's position on the Wizengamot.*" Tom led them slowly to the fold. "*I will take the offered Ministry job*."

Hadrian nodded. He knew that Tom would; it was inevitable. The man had many offers from all divisions, especially with his predicted NEWT grades, but there was only one 'job' - Junior Assistant to the Minister for Magic. A new position, just for Tom.

"Ah, the young men of the hour," Minister Spencer-Moon said loudly, clearly having had too much spiced wine. "Mr Peverell, we were wondering where you had disappeared to. There are a few people desperate to meet your acquaintance."

As he plastered a polite smile onto his face, he held onto Tom's arm tightly to anchor him into reality. This was the total opposite of what he wanted. Tom was good in that he saw Hadrian's dislike, charming everyone around them so that their attention wavered enough for him to breathe.

This whole event was making connections. Hadrian could have any job he wanted...but having spent the last year being trained to kill under Gellert Grindelwald, he had never afforded the idea he would return to normal society, not a criminal. Part of him had resigned his fate to Azkaban. He had time though, a few more months until his exams. Onyx had already vowed to stay with his 'beloved' at Hogwarts. The sap.

He looked up at Tom as his lover gave a quiet chuckle at a young woman's joke. Those cinnamon eyes glittered with excitement at being the centre of attention and it put Hadrian at ease, his shoulders loosening. Riddle's face turned towards him, those eyes darkening a little before he pressed a kiss to Hadrian's mouth. It was short, but a statement nevertheless. No one would ever get between them. No one could ever get close.

Chapter End Notes

So, we are actually at the end of Part 1!

Part 2 was never on the cards, but I really do not feel like this is finished. The next part will take place 14ish years in the future, with Tom as Minister.

I would say, if there is anything you want to see in the next part, drop me a comment or message and I will try and see if it fits with the rough plan I have in mind. If there are any characters you want more of, or any other tags etc just try me.

Part 2 will definitely justify the 'explicit' rating, so hold on!

It will continue to be posted on Cacoethes, to make it easier.

Sequel

Dear all,

Thank you for all of the amazing reviews and support. The sequel is finally starting - entitled 'Solivagant'. You can find it on the series tab above.

Enjoy!

End Notes

Let me know what you think!

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!